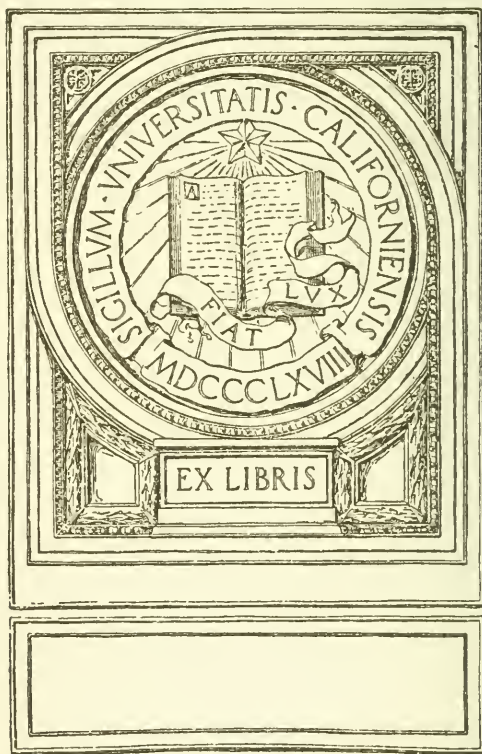


THE BLINDNESS
OF DR. GRAY

CANON SHEEHAN

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES





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By CANON SHEEHAN, D.D

LUKE DELMEGE: *A Novel.*

LISHEEN: *or the Test of the Spirits. A Novel.*

GLENANAAR: *A Novel of Irish Life.*

THE BLINDNESS OF DR. GRAY; *or, The Final Law.*
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TRISTRAM LLOYD: *An Unfinished Novel. Edited and
completed by Rev. H. Gaffney, O.P.*

THE BLINDNESS OF DR. GRAY
OR
THE FINAL LAW

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The
Blindness of Dr. Gray
OR
The Final Law

BY
CANON SHEEHAN, D.D.

Author of
"My New Curate," "Luke Delmege," "Glenanaar,"
"Lisheen," etc.

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BOOK I

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law —
Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shriek'd against his creed.

— *In Memoriam*, LVI.

THE BLINDNESS OF DR. GRAY

CHAPTER I

AN AMERICAN LETTER

THE Very Reverend William Gray, D.D., Parish Priest of the united parishes of Doonvarragh, Lackagh, and Athboy, came down to breakfast one dark, gloomy December morning in the year of our Lord 18—. He had risen early, like all the old priests of his generation, made his half-hour's meditation according to his rigorous rule and habit, made his quarter-hour's preparation for Mass, celebrated the Holy Sacrifice, and with the burden of years and the cares which the years will bring, came slowly down the softly-carpeted stairs, and glancing with an ominous shrug of the shoulders at the pile of letters which lay on his writing desk, he sat down to table, broke his egg, looked out on the gloomy wintry landscape, shuddered a little, pushed aside the egg, ate a crust of toast rather meditatively than with any appetite for such things, drank a cup of tea, and pulled the bell. His aged domestic made her appearance.

"Has the paper come?"

"No," she said. "The boy is always late these times."

"These times?" he asked sharply. "Why these times?"

"Near Christmas," she replied, rubbing her hands in her check apron, "everything is late. Everybody is in a hurry."

"What has that to do with the daily paper?" he said.

"That might be an excuse for a late post. But what has that to do with the paper? Remove those things."

He turned to his pile of letters. There were the usual

rolls of bazaar tickets, red and yellow, offering fabulous prizes for sixpence; bulky letters, containing more bazaar tickets, but accompanied with pitiful appeals for help to clear off debts from £500 to £5000 on convent chapels, monastic schools, etc. There were circulars from Dublin merchants offering new kinds of tea, or new brands of wine, at moderate prices. There were circulars from new companies, promising immense dividends at low stock prices.

All these he promptly flung into the waste-paper basket, muttering:

“What a lot of idle people there are in this world!”

Then, he took up what may be called his personal correspondence. Some of these shared the fate of the circulars. He put three aside for further consideration or possible reply.

The first was an anonymous letter written in lead pencil and very imperfect in its orthography, informing him that, unless he promptly dismissed an assistant teacher from his school at Athboy the parishioners would know the reason why; and teach him that “they might be led, but would not be driven.” The gravamen in this case was that the young teacher, who had been selected for the school on account of his ability and perfect training, had the misfortune to be the nephew of a man who had taken a derelict farm, for which he had paid a handsome sum of money to the tenants who had been evicted, and who were doing well in America. Dr. William Gray put that letter aside, pursed his lips, and said: “We’ll see!”

The second was from his Bishop, informing him that he had made a change of curates for the united parishes of Doonvarragh, Lackagh, and Athboy; and was sending him a young priest, named Henry Liston, who had been for some months chaplain to a convent in a large town in the diocese.

“Humph!” said Dr. William Gray. “He might have given me more notice, or consulted me. There’s no Canon Law in the Church to-day. A parish priest is

a nobody. Liston! I don't care for him. A priggish little fellow, although he had a decent father and mother."

He sat musing for a while.

"This poor fellow," he murmured at length, alluding to his departing curate, "is no great loss. A perfect *minus habens*, without an idea of Theology in his head!"

He placed the Bishop's letter in a rack for further use.

The third letter was from America. There was the familiar head of Lincoln on the dark-blue stamp, and there was the postmark: Chicago, Ill.

"Who can this be?" he said. "More trouble, I suppose; or a baptismal certificate for some old pensioner of the Civil War!"

He slit it open, and read:

Chicago, Ill.,

24 November, 18...

Very Rev. dear Father,

I regret to have to announce to you the sad tidings of the death of your sister, Mrs. O'Farrell, at the Consumptive Hospital, in this city. She had been in failing health for some time; and had some idea of returning to her native climate. But her disease had so far progressed that this became impossible. She had every possible attention, medical and otherwise, during the last weeks of her illness; and had received the Last Sacraments from my hands. She was patient and resigned, her only anxiety being the future of her little daughter, Annie, whom she committed to your paternal care. When her affairs are wound up, and her property realized, I shall let you know how her circumstances stood, and the date on which the child can leave America for her future home.

I am, Very Rev. Father,

Yours in C^t.

GERALD FALVEY, *Rector.*

Dr. William Gray did not place that letter on the rack. He held it open in his hands; and turning his chair toward the fire, he remained for a long time silently musing. Did a tear gather and fall from those stern, gray eyes under their penthouses of white, shaggy eye-brows? Did his hands tremble a little, with their thin, red veins, through which the life-blood now ran sluggishly after

its three-score years and three of labour? Did he dwell on their boyhood and girlhood up there in the hills where the solitary yew-tree still stands guarding the old place where the Grays had lived for generations? Did he think of her sweet looks, her bright, girlish face, half-gypsy, half-saintlike in its perfect contour, and the dark hair that framed it irregularly, and tossed riotously across her forehead without restraint of net or bodkin? And her homecomings, when she came back from the boarding-school in Dublin, and he returned on his holidays from Maynooth; and he wondered and was glad when people turned around on Sunday morning and riveted their eyes upon her? Perhaps so! But if the tear fell, and the thin, bony hand trembled — and I do not aver that they did — it might have been from another recollection, when on a certain day he had said, when others' opinions were wavering for and against her:

“Yes! She must go. It is the law!”

And it was no great crime that Helena Gray was guilty of — no violent rupture of Divine or human law that demanded the ostracism of her kind. Only some youthful indiscretion — some silly letters that had been found in her trunk, revealing a little girlish frivolity, but nothing more. Yet, the honour of the Grays was tarnished thereby; and they were a stern race, with the family pride that dominated them accentuated by some hundred years of such rigid and stainless virtue, that a breath would now blot and tarnish it. Motherly affection had struggled against paternal pride, and angry debates had been heard up there in the cottage where the black yew-tree flung its ominous shadow, until at last the girl herself declared that life was intolerable and she would go to her aunt in America. Then the young priest was called in.

He came. He was still a young curate, but he had already acquired the reputation of strength bordering upon harshness, and of an inexorable adherence to law, which amongst an easy-going and flexible population made him feared, and almost hated. In his own home

he was also an object of dread. His stern, clear-cut, pallid features, never illuminated by a smile, were to them but the index of a cold, hard, unfeeling nature, which might be respected, but could not command the reverence of great love. His dignity of bearing and his Doctor's distinction added to the solemnity of his character. Probably his mother alone loved him; and next after her supreme affection, was the more pallid and sisterly affection of her on whom he was now called to utter judgment.

He did so with all the calm indifference of one accustomed to legislate or act under a criminal code. The letters were placed in his hands.

He read them over carefully, a certain contempt for girlish frivolity showing itself in his stern face. When he came to the expressions that had challenged criticism, his thin lips drew together; his nose drew down like a beak; and two deep furrows gathered between his eyes.

When he had finished reading, he folded the incriminating letters slowly and carefully, and without handing them back to his mother, he said quietly:

"Helena wishes to go abroad?"

"She says so," said his mother. "But she is so young, barely sixteen."

"She is old enough to know the meaning of such language as this," he said, shaking the letter.

"The words are not very ladylike," said his mother. "But they are not sinful."

"They are coarse and vulgar," the young priest replied. Then, after a pause, he added:

"Let her go! It is better!"

The mother murmured something about such punishment for mere indiscretion and levity. He stopped her.

"Every violation of law is punished," he said, "errors and mistakes as well as sins. It is the law."

Then he hastily added:

"Her sentence is her own, is it not? It is her own wish to go away?"

"Yes!" said his mother hesitatingly.

"Then let her go!" he said.

Some weeks later, the young exile wrote a pitiful letter to her brother asking for a farewell interview. She had no resentment toward him. She admired him too much. He was her idol—her God. He could do no wrong. It was only she, poor frail girl that could do wrong. She wanted to see him, to kneel for his blessing, to throw her arms around his neck in a farewell embrace, to implore pardon.

He thought it over judiciously, formed one or two syllogisms, and decided it were better not to see his sister. He was unwell for some days after; and, when he resumed work, some people noticed that his hair had turned gray over the ears.

From this it will easily be conjectured what manner of man was Dr. William Gray. A hard, proud, domineering disposition had been doubly annealed under the teaching of a rigorous theological system, that approached as closely to Jansenism as orthodoxy might. The natural bias of his mind toward rule and discipline had been strengthened beneath the teaching of a school where the divinity of law predominated; and he had come by degrees to believe that of all other human certainties, this was the most certain, that Law was everywhere, and was everywhere paramount and even supreme. The Law of Nature, so unfeeling, so despotic, so revengeful; the Natural Law guiding human conscience, so inflexible toward lower instincts and desires; the Law of the Realm, with its fines and punishments; Canon Law, with its interdicts and excommunications; Ecclesiastical Law, national, provincial, diocesan, that bound as with gossamer threads, but was as rigid as iron when you tried to break through—yes! Law was everywhere, and the slightest infraction of it was followed by a stern retribution. There was no escape. We might murmur, but must obey. And all lower feelings and instincts had to be marshalled and summoned and drilled into absolute submission to universal and inexorable Law.

And yet? As the tall form bent down almost double over the peat and wood fire in the grate this gloomy December morning, was it a tear that stained the white page of the American letter? Did his bony hand tremble and shake as he stirred the white ashes and kindled a fresh flame amongst the charred embers that lay at his feet? We know not.

He rose up at length from his stooping posture, and walked up and down the dining-room, a favourite exercise of his whenever he was in a gloomy and anxious condition of mind, his hands folded tightly behind his back, grasping that ill-omened American letter. He was agitated with remorse for the past, and with anxiety for the future. The words of that letter — "hospital," "consumption," "only child," "your sister," seemed to rise out of the page and smite him, each with its own deadly blow; and the strong man trembled beneath their suggestions, as a lordly oak trembles beneath the strokes of an axe swung by a pigmy beneath its branches. Sad reminiscences woke up that had been hidden away and buried beneath the débris of the years; and he became aware of the fact, that should never be forgotten, that the human heart, however seared and shrunk, holds a terrible vitality unto the last.

Then the question would arise about this child. Accustomed to a solitary life and the deeper solitude of his own thoughts, he had always shrunk from any invasion on the privacy of his home. He had grown into the habit of neither giving nor accepting invitations to dinner, except with his own curates; and the idea of having a visitor in the house to be watched, and tended and fed and entertained was always intolerable. He had to put up with such things on the occasion of a visitation; and once or twice, when he had a mission in his parish. But it was a time of uneasiness and trouble, which he terminated as speedily as decency would permit; and then resigned himself to the delightful luxury of being alone again. And now, here comes a cool suggestion from a priest, of

whom he had never heard before, to take into his house, permanently, a girl of unknown age and disposition, and to keep her and be responsible for her during her lifetime. The idea was simply appalling. He even laughed at it. But then the letter would rustle in his hands; the dread words "your sister," "consumption," "hospital," "only child," would repeat themselves with their suggestion that now was the time and opportunity to redress and atone for the past, until the man was almost half-distracted with remorse on the one hand and nameless terrors on the other.

He stopped suddenly in his walk, and touched the bell. When the housekeeper appeared, he ordered his horse to be brought around. It was his refuge in all cases of perplexity. The exercise, that drove the stagnant blood of old age bounding to the brain, cleared his faculties, and enabled him to think with calmness, judgment, and force.

His way lay along a narrow but perfectly level road, bordered on both sides by deep bogs or marshes, where some attempts had been made at drainage, for there were deep cuttings filled with water, and edged with rushes and sedge, their sides lined with the black peat that gave fire to the villagers. The sea had conquered all human efforts to restrain it; and there far out were black pools of seawater left by the receding tide, and bordered with dreary sand-heaps, where a coarse and tufty grass was waving in the wind. And just beyond was a wider reach of sand, where no grass grew, and here the gray wastes of the sea commenced their dreary stretch toward the horizon.

When the horse's feet touched the firm wet sand, his rider pushed him into a trot, thence into a rapid canter, and then into a gallop, which he held steadily for the three miles of sandy beach that lay level before him. At the end where the red sandstone cliffs closed the beach, a tiny forest of upright timbers, sea-beaten and covered with a green slimy weed, looked like the naked ribs of some submerged and dismantled ship. Here he dismounted,

and flinging his bridle over one of these upright posts, he sat down on one of the redstone boulders that kept the timbers, originally intended as a breakwater, in their place; and looking out over the sad and lonely wastes of the sea, he took up his problems again. They took this form:

"Only yesterday, I had flattered myself with the thought that my worries had ceased. That wretched money affair, that cost me nights of sleepless agony, settled itself in its own way at last. That Income Tax surveyor appears to be satisfied that I am not defrauding his wretched Government. Mulcahy has settled *his* question by 'leaving his country for his country's good.' Last night I slept a few hours — the first I had free from the petty worries of men for months. And now! here are three more worries just when I was assuring myself that I should have peace, peace. Of course, the first is easily settled. There is a principle at stake there. That makes matters easy. *Fiat justitia, ruat coelum*. I meet these fellows with a *Non possum*. They may go further; but I shall not care. Liston is a fellow I don't care much for. But he may turn out better than I hoped. But this girl! — !"

He stood up, and found to his surprise that the anguish, remorse and anxiety of the morning were suddenly swept aside. The dread words "hospital," "consumptive," no longer stabbed him with pain; and he found himself laughing at the absurdity of entertaining even for an instant the idea of taking his niece into his house.

"I'll write to that fellow to-night," he said, "and tell him to mind his own business. And if he presumes to send that girl over here, I'll pack her back by the next boat. The idea!!!"

He remounted his horse and rode back by another road, that led by the outskirts of a little hamlet, consisting of two or three houses. Apart from these, and just at the angle of the road that skirted a demesne wall, was a cottage quite different from ordinary buildings of the

kind, inasmuch as it was gabled and the Gothic windows were filled with diamond panes of glass, bedded in lead. It seemed as if built for a lodge for some mansion, yet it was isolated and apart. It was occupied by an old woman, over ninety years of age, who had been stone-blind and bed-ridden for years, and her granddaughter, who supported both by washing. Here the priest drew up his horse, and shouted. There was no answer. He then came nearer, and knocked on the open door with the handle of his whip. The strong voice of the old woman rang down the stairs:

"Who's there? And what do ye want?"

"It is I, the parish priest, Betty," he said, in a loud voice.

"I beg your Reverence's pardon; but what do ye want; and where's Nance?"

"I'm sure I don't know where's Nance," he shouted back. "But I want to tell you that I am coming in the morning to say Mass for you, and give you your Christmas Communion."

"God bless you!" she said. "But only on the ould conditions."

"Of course," he replied, "the old conditions. And I want your advice, too. Is it all right?"

"Av coorse it is," she said. "I'll tell Nance, and she'll have everything ready."

"Very good!" he said. "I'll have the basket sent over to-night."

He cantered away; and after dinner he sat down to his desk and wrote a very emphatic letter to the priest in Chicago to the effect that, although he regretted deeply the demise of his sister, and was gratified to learn that she had received all the rites of the Church, Canon Law and all other laws forbade him peremptorily from entertaining even for a moment the idea of opening his house to his orphan niece. It was against all precedent. He would be happy, although poor, to subscribe something toward her maintenance and education in America, if

her own means were not sufficient. But on no account whatsoever was she to be deported to Ireland. He added a brief but pregnant postscript to the effect that sometimes priests suffer from overzeal; and that it would always be wise to consider a little and take into account the feelings and circumstances of others before presuming to trespass on their domestic affairs.

This letter he posted, and dismissed that subject as one with which he had no further concern.

CHAPTER II

A CHANGE OF CURATES

IF the good pastor of Doonvarragh, Lackagh, and Athboy was much disturbed on that gray December morning in the year of our Lord 18—, his future curate, Father Henry, or Harry, Liston (as every one called him) cannot be said to have been much elated on his promotion.

Of course, it was promotion, inasmuch as he passed thereby from the condition of a chaplain to that of curate; and it was rapid, and therefore honourable promotion, for he had been but a few years ordained. Yet, he was not happy. The change meant for him the translation from town-life, to which he had been born, to country-life, with which he was quite unacquainted. But that would have been but a slight cause for depression. The major cause, that which drove his spirits below zero, was the reflection that he was now to be brought into intimate relationship with a parish priest to whom he had always looked up with a certain kind of reverential dread.

As he poised the episcopal letter in his fingers and wondered what strange mental operations must pass through episcopal minds to move them to such singular actions, he remembered with a cold shudder the day when the tall, gaunt, black figure of his future superior suddenly stood by him, as he waded through some proposition in the Sixth Book of Euclid; he remembered the hard rasping voice, demanding abruptly why the angle ACB was equivalent in value to DEF and GHO even though they clubbed their forces together; and the unkind sentence:

"You know nothing at all about it, I suppose," which was passed on his silence.

He remembered, too, the shiver of dread with which he raised the chasuble on the same gaunt figure at the elevation of the Mass; and how he cast down his eyes, not daring from his seat on the altar steps to look up at the terrible apparition with the keen eagle face, and the thin lips that uttered such startling and terrible truths to the silent and awed congregation.

He remembered his first meeting on his summer holidays from the seminary, the abrupt question, "What are you reading?" the shy answer, "Greek and Mathematics"; the second question, "What is the Paulo-Post-Future of *τύπτω*?" his own silence; the subsequent question: "How do you construct a perfect oval, and what proportions do its diameters bear to each other?" his own repeated discomfitures; and the final verdict:

"You know no more of these things than you do of Hebrew."

The reminiscences were not enlivening; nor were they made more pleasant by the rumours that pervaded the diocese that the Very Rev. Dr. Gray was a harsh, crabbed, sour misanthropist; and that his reputation as "a great theologian" hardly mollified public opinion and softened it into deeper charity for social imperfections.

Above all, he had heard that his future pastor was not only a rigorist in theology, but a rigid disciplinarian, who never knew what it was to dispense in a law either for himself or others. He had heard that this grave, stern man fasted, like an ancient anchorite, the whole of Lent, and never took or granted a dispensation; that he was inflexible in the observances of statutes, national, provincial, or diocesan; that he came down with the fury of a revengeful deity on any infraction of law, or any public scandal; that he was a kind of Christian Druid, with a sacrificial knife in one hand and the head of his victim in the other. And yet, he had a dim suspicion that with all the brusqueness and abruptness that this

great man had showed toward himself, there was some concealed tenderness, some deep interest, ill-shown but deeply felt. And in his own heart, vibrating under emotions of fear for the future, there was also a hidden sense of worship for the greatness of the man to whom his future destinies were now being entrusted, and some kind of hidden, unspoken, unrevealed affection, which he dare not avow even to himself.

Their first meeting was not propitious.

"Sit down!" said Dr. William Gray. "So the Bishop has thought right to send you here!"

"Yes, Sir!" said his curate demurely.

"You must have some excellent influence at work to induce his Lordship to promote you so rapidly."

The curate was silent.

"Why, it seems only yesterday when I put the Latin Grammar in your hands."

The Latin Grammar was an ancient volume, bound in ancient calf, written in ancient type, and composed by some ancient school-master. Henry Liston remembered it well, because he had never returned it to its owner. He had been too much afraid to approach him. He was silent now.

"Well," continued the grim man, as he stood on the hearthrug, his back to the fire, and his eyes looking out as if challenging some far-off antagonist, and not the humble curate at his feet, "your duties here will be simple, and not embarrassing. You will say Mass at ten o'clock every Sunday and holiday at Lackagh, and at Athboy at twelve. You will preach at every Mass. The sermons *need* not be long, and *must* not be transcendently foolish. No silly eloquence or tawdry rhetoric, but plain, catechetical discourses to the people on their duties. You will take up the two collections, and render me an exact account of them when required. Do you follow me?"

The curate murmured something.

"Confessions," the grim man went on, holding his right-hand forward, a pinch of snuff between the thumb

and index-finger, and the other fingers stretched apart and outward threateningly, "every Saturday at twelve o'clock sharp, alternately at Lackagh and Athboy, and the first Saturday of every month here at Doonvarragh."

"I guess I'll be welcome here," thought the curate.

"You will visit every school in your district at least once a week, and catechize the children; and you shall never leave the parish without permission."

Here Henry Liston bridled up.

"The statutes give permission to a curate to be absent twenty-four hours by merely notifying his parish priest," he said.

"Statutes?" shouted Dr. William Gray. "Yes! but remember, young man, that it is quite competent for a parish priest to make his own parochial arrangements, independent of, or ancillary to, the statutes of the diocese; and *that* is my regulation."

He took a pinch of snuff, half of which fell down on his waistcoat, already dyed brown, and then he concluded:

"You will dine with me at five o'clock every Sunday, without fail."

Henry Liston started up.

"I'm blessed if I will," he cried. "No amount of Canon Law can interfere with the personal liberty of a man —"

"Sit down!" ordered his pastor peremptorily.

Henry sat down.

"What rubbish have you been reading? Not your Theology evidently, still less your 'Selva' or 'Challoner.'"

"I don't fail to study Theology at proper times and places," said the curate. "I don't think a man is bound to sleep with a folio under his head."

"N—no," said the pastor, looking at him admiringly, "but," he drawled, as if in mockery of his curate, "at proper times and places. Now, what author are you reading — say in Moral Theology?"

"Lehmkuhl!" said his curate, confidently.

"Limekiln!" echoed Dr. William Gray, "I never heard of such a writer."

"Oh! he is well known," said Henry airily, "everybody knows the distinguished German Jesuit. He has put your Gury's and Ballerini's on the shelf."

The pastor glowered at him for a moment, then took a pinch of snuff and smiled.

"Very well!" he said, "we'll see more about it. Finally, it sometimes happens that young curates, when they come into a parish, think they have a right to fit up the curate's house at parochial expense, and in a manner more suitable to some coxcomb of a doctor or lawyer than a priest. Now, mark me! You shall not spend one penny on that house without previously submitting the items to me. Do you understand?"

His curate nodded.

"Write down a list of necessary repairs if any are necessary; and let me see them. I shall mark off all that I think may be dispensed with, and shall give you an order for the remainder. Have you seen the house? No! Well, go and see it. I suppose that *angashore* is there yet."

Nothing loth, Henry Liston escaped from the lion's den, and rode down to see the curate whom he was replacing. He found the latter toiling hard amidst a heap of huge boxes and cases, his coat and hat off, and his hands as black from the dust of books as if he had been handling coal.

"Hallo!" he cried. "You here! You've lost no time!"

"No," said Henry Liston. "I've been up to see the parish priest and get directions."

"And — you got them!" said the other significantly.

"Yes. Curt and sharp, cut and dry! I say, what kind of a place is this?"

"Come here," said the coatless curate. "Look and see!"

It was a dreary landscape enough in all conscience. A vast marsh, cut up by drainage or irrigating canals,

seemed to stretch interminably before them, the sedges and bushes waving dismally in the wind; and, as if to emphasize the loneliness and desolation, a solitary heron stood on one leg by the side of a sea-lagoon intently watching for its prey. All was silence, solitude, desolation. Afar off, where at last there appeared to be habitable land, a few farmers' houses, embedded in trees, gave a shadow of civilization to the desert; and the little white-washed chapel on the hill, its solitary bell-tower emerging from the wasted trees around it, spoke at least of some kind of population to be summoned Sunday after Sunday to Mass.

"It is not very inviting!" remarked Henry Liston.

"No!" said the departing curate. "What did you do to be sent here?"

"The pastor is after asking me what tremendous influences did I set to work to secure such a prize!" said Henry.

"Ah! the pastor!" said the other, mournfully and sentimentously.

"By the way," he continued, after a pause, during which he deposited several grimy volumes in the bottom of a case, "did he examine you in Theology?"

"N-no!" said Henry. "He was beginning; but I shut him up!"

"Shut him up?" echoed the other, admiringly but incredulously.

"Yes!" said Henry. "I mentioned Lehmkuhl, the German Jesuit who has come out in two volumes, you know. He had never heard of him, but thought I said Limekiln, and then he went no further!"

"By Jove, that's the best joke I have heard for many a long day. Look here, Liston, I'll send that on the wings of the wind far and away across the diocese. It won't extinguish him, though. You can't extinguish him!"

His voice dropped from a tone of exultation to one of sadness and despair.

"When I came here," he continued, taking down

book after book from the shelves, but talking over his shoulders at Henry Liston, "I managed for a time, too, to shut him up. I found he knew all about Lugo and Suarez and Petavius — every line of them and every opinion they ever expressed. He had the greatest contempt for the Salmanticenses, and I flung them at him on every occasion, although I never saw a volume of these interesting novelists in my life. He used to get awfully mad; but these little fits were only moonlight unto sunlight, when I quoted *Sa*. The first time I mentioned *Sa*, I thought he'd go for me. He glared and glowered at me without a word for fully five minutes; and then he said with his rasping, contemptuous voice: '*Sa! Sa!* Who's *Sa*? And what do you know of *Sa*?' 'Why,' I said, 'every one knows *Sa* — Emmanuel *Sa*, the greatest theologian that ever lived.' 'The greatest theologian that ever lived?' he shouted. 'Greater than Suarez, greater than Vasquez, greater than Lugo?' 'Certainly,' I replied, 'greater than all, except Aquinas.' 'Oh, then, you've heard of St. Thomas?' he said sarcastically. 'A little,' I replied, waving my hand in the air, as if it were of no consequence. 'But I'd recommend you to read *Sa*. *Sa* and the Salmanticenses would make a man of you.' He was too stupefied to say more, except one word: 'You read *Sa* of course, *nocturna versans manu, versans diurna*?' 'Yes!' I said calmly and solemnly, '*Sa* is on my dressing-table in the morning; *Sa* is my pillow at night.'"

"You had tremendous courage," said Henry Liston admiringly. "Did he say any more?"

"He said no more," said the toiling curate, stopping in his work, and turning round, "but a few days afterwards he came up here on some pretext or another, and, after a little while, he came over here and soon began to examine my books, talking about indifferent matters all the time. I knew what he was looking for, but I wanted to see the play out. After he had probed and examined every shelf, he was about to go away, and had

reached the door. Then, as if suddenly remembering something, he wheeled round, and said: 'By the way, that Spanish theologian you spoke of, would you let me see him?' 'I'm afraid,' I said, 'I can't issue a Habeas Corpus into eternity to evoke the immortal spirit of *Sa*; but I keep his works in my bedroom, as I told you. Just one minute, and I will deliver the immortal part of him into your hands.'

"But you haven't *Sa*?" said Henry Liston.

"Oh, yes, I have," said his comrade, producing a thick ancient volume, red-edged, and bound in boards, or stamped leather that had the consistency of boards, "here you are!"

"By Jove!" said Henry Liston, "this is a surprise!"

"Not much greater than our good pastor experienced," continued his friend. "You never saw such consternation in your life as was depicted on his face. And when he opened the interesting volume, and saw it all dog-eared and marked and underlined, I thought he'd get a fit. And he would, only that he fell in love with the ugly thing in an instant, and wanted to know would I sell it. I said 'No! I am not a bookseller; and besides, I could not live without *Sa*. He is meat, drink, food, clothing, and lodging to me. Take anything else you like, but don't take *Sa*.' All the time he was turning and fondling the book, just like a girl with her first doll, thumbing the leaves, running back to the index, studying the date, feeling the consistency of the leather, until at last I was beginning to relent. But I drew myself together, and was firm. Finally, he handed back the book with a sigh, and I thought his soul would go out in the effort. I took it from him affectionately, as one would take a lost treasure; but, do you know, Harry, I'm going to give it to him now."

"No?" said Henry Liston, incredulously.

"Yes, I am, and I'll tell you the reason presently. But I've never asked you to take something, as we say in these parts. I can't give you a decent dinner —"

Henry Liston protested.

"But I'll get you a substitute for one in five minutes. What would you think of a few chops and eggs and a cup of tea?"

"Oh, no, no," said the new curate, "you're upset; and I won't be long getting home."

But the good man persisted, and ordered the eatables. And meanwhile Henry Liston was taking stock of the disordered place.

"I guess," he said, when his friend came back, "I'll have a large order on the pastor for repairs."

"You will," said his friend, "and remember, the larger the better. The best way to deal with this man is to daze him, to mesmerize him by audacity. He has two pet objects of detestation — a stupid man, and a timid man. Now, whilst we are waiting, let us see! Have you a bit of paper about you, — an envelope or something?"

"Here's the Bishop's letter, which I presented this morning!"

"The very thing," said his friend. "You see the Bishop is considerate. He always leaves a blank page for such things. Take thy pen, or pencil, and write down quickly, thou son of Mammon!"

"Where shall we begin?" said Henry.

"Here, of course. Write: Dining-room — to be newly papered in maroon; window-shutters, doors, and all wood-work to be painted in faint pink, panels in rose-colour. Have you that down?"

"I have!" said Henry faintly.

"Very good. Now! Drawing-room — by the way, you may expect a little characteristic sarcasm there. 'Drawing-room,' he'll say, 'no! boudoir! that's a better word.' But you mustn't mind. Go on! Drawing-room — to be papered white, with chrysanthemum leaves in gray. All the woodwork to be painted white; panels in pale blue or green. All right?"

"All right!" said Henry.

"Two front bedrooms," continued his friend. "First to be papered in French gray, woodwork to be painted in same colour; panels and architraves in lavender. He'll like that! Second room, to be papered in sage-green, all woodwork to be painted white; panels, sea-green. All down?"

"All down!" said Henry.

"Now, write: Back bedrooms, hall and staircase — *to be left to the option of pastor!*"

"Look here!" said Henry Liston, despairingly. "This would never do. He'd murder me!"

"Never fear!" said his friend. "That last hint will fetch him completely. 'Left to option of pastor!' By Jove! won't he stare? But, mark me, young man, 'tis your first and greatest victory. Come along now, and eat something. Oh, by the way, I was near forgetting. Write down: New range, and floors of stables to be tiled in small pattern, and chamfered, with channels, drains, etc. That's all, I think. But we may remember something else as we get along!"

When they parted, Henry said to the curate:

"You said you were going to give Sa to the pastor, and that you'd tell me the reason."

"Yes, I will," said his friend, laying his hand on Henry's arm, and speaking slowly and solemnly:

"I've been chaffing a good deal. We must, you know, to keep off the blues sometimes. But I am going to make a present of Sa to the pastor, because he is a great and good man — one of the greatest men I have seen as yet. Others, who find fault with him, are like choughs or sea-gulls, wheeling round a granite cliff. He is not only a great thinker, but a great man —"

"I'm better pleased than if I got a five-pound note to hear you say that," broke in Henry. "Do you know that is the opinion I always had of the pastor?"

"And you were right," said his friend. "Now, for example, you have often heard how hard he is about money?"

"Yes! he certainly has that reputation," said Henry.

"And he has got that name," said the other, "from the very persons who received the greatest benefactions from him. For example, he is strict at the stations about the dues, and people who hear him thundering around, say he is avaricious. They don't know that he gives that Station-offering to every poor crofter and cottier in the bedroom or parlour before he calls the list. He has an awful name about marriages. Yes! he insists on being paid. But his own share goes back again into their pockets, if they are poor. And, mind you, he knows that he leaves people under false impressions about himself; but he doesn't care. The man is utterly indifferent to human opinion. He believes that all human judgments are infallibly wrong. But, when you get inside that awful manner of his and his insistence: 'It is the law!' you find a man whom you are forced to respect and even to love. That's why I am leaving him with regret and giving him this wretched thing."

"By Jove! you and I agree there," said Henry Liston enthusiastically. "Do you know that although I grew up in fear and trembling before him, somehow I felt I had a warm corner in my heart for him; and do you know, I think he has some interest in me."

"Well, all's for the best, I suppose," said his friend. "And this old place is not so bad as it seems. This is the worst of it. Around the corner here the cliffs run along a mile or two, and there are the prettiest little coves in the world. The people, too, are good. A little turbulent sometimes. The pastor has a row on his hands just now about a school assistant here. It is only a diversion. There'll be a lot of bad temper and bad language; but he'll come out all right in the end. These things break up the monotony of life. There are a good many Protestant families; but they are all friendly and nice. There's an old gypsy here behind on the cliffs, who's no great things. Doesn't go to church, Mass or meeting, and she'll some day assassinate the pastor for

denouncing her off the altar. But all the rest is smooth and nice. Do you know, Henry, you're a lucky fellow. I'll come around to see you sometimes, and get a glimpse of the old place. Good-bye! If there are any old things here that would be useful to you, seize on them at once. There's a lot of turf, and wood from an old ship, and things of that kind. Good-bye!"

Henry Liston thought there were tears in that voice that mocked so freely.

CHAPTER III

A STRANGE ACCOMPANIMENT

WHEN Dr. William Gray entered the house of old Betty Lane and began to ascend the crazy stairs, the first thing he heard was the voice of the old blind woman, challenging her granddaughter Nance:

"Is he come yet?" she shouted.

"Not yet!" said the girl. "He'll be here presently."

"What a long time he takes to dress himself," she said in the same high key. "The ould priests usedn't take all that time with theirselves."

"Whist, he's here now," whispered Nance.

"Tell him, he must hear my confession," said the old woman, "before he begins Mass. I mustn't appear before me Lord and Saviour with all these sins upon me sowl!"

The sight that met his eyes when he entered the little chamber was one that would touch a harder heart than his; and, as we have seen, there was by no means a hard heart beneath the black coat of Dr. William Gray.

The table, on which he was to celebrate Mass, was pulled over near the old woman's bed, and had its spotless cloths already arranged by the little acolyte. There were a few sprays of flowers upon it, and the two candles allowed by the Rubrics. But the rest of the room was a blaze of light. In a glass case, to shield them from dust, were two gorgeous statues, shining in red and gold, and before these, six large candles were blazing. Here and there, in presence of little *eikons* or sacred pictures, other candles were alight, and fairy lamps of every colour shone resplendent before every picture of Our Lady. There

was a subtle perfume in the room from a few bunches of violets, which the piety of this poor girl had purchased from a neighbouring gardener.

The old woman's confession having been heard, the priest proceeded to vest for Mass; and then commenced and continued the Holy Sacrifice to the strangest accompaniment that was ever heard. For Catholics, as a rule, attend the celebration of the Divine Mysteries in reverential silence, and no sound breaks the stillness except a sob or a cough; but this morning the prayers of the Church were almost stifled by the loud and fervent and emphatic prayers of the blind creature who lay there, her head on her pillow, and her sightless eyes straining after Heaven. Hers, too, was no beautiful face, transfigured by age into that strange pallor of loveliness, that seems to many more attractive than youth. It was a strongly-marked, rugged, wrinkled, and furrowed face that had been burnt by the suns, and whipped and battered by the storms of ninety years; and into which old Time had driven his chisel too freely. Nothing seemed to remain of her early strength, except her voice, which was coarse, resonant, and masculine.

"Where is he now?" she shouted to her granddaughter, although the priest was not three feet away from her bed.

"He's at the *Glory in excelsis*," cried Nance.

"Glory be to You, my God, in the highest," shouted the old woman, whilst her sightless eyes seemed to kindle with the internal vision, "and pace on airth to min of good will. We praise Thee — we bless Thee — we adore Thee — we glorify Thee — we give Thee thanks because of Thy great glory. Lord God! Heavenly King! God, the Father Almighty! O Lord Jesus Christ, only-begotten Son! Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father! Thou, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us!"

Here she struck her breast so violently that the bed shook beneath her.

"Thou, who takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer!"

Her voice dropped to a whisper, and she shook her head from side to side.

"Thou, who sittest at the right-hand of the Father, have mercy on us!"

She struck her breast fiercely again.

"For Thou alone art Holy!"

She shook her head from side to side.

"Thou alone art Lord!"

She shook her head again.

"Thou alone art Most High!"

She flung out her old wrinkled arms toward the ceiling of the room.

"Jesus Christ! who with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest for ever and ever, Amen!"

The tears were running down her cheeks, and she wiped them aside with a handkerchief, and seemed to relapse into silence, turning over the beads in her hands.

Then, after a pause, she shouted:

"Nance?"

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Where is he now?"

"At the Offertory, ma'am!"

"We offer Thee, O Lord," she cried out, "this bread and wine, which is about to become the Body and Blood of Christ, that Thou mayst accept it a clane oblation for us, and for the whole wuruld. And I, Thy poor crachure, offer Thee my poor body, soon to be dust an' ashes in the grave, an' me poor sowl, which Thou wilt save from everlasting damnation, to do with wan an' the other whatever may be plazing to Thy most Holy Will!"

She relapsed into silence again. When the faint tinkling of the bell, however, warned that the Consecration of the Mass was at hand, she shouted louder than before:

"Nance?"

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Where is he now? Is that the bell for the rising of the Host?"

"It is!" said Nance.

"Thin, come here and lift me up," she cried. "How dare a poor crachure, like me, to be lying on the flat of me back whin the great King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, is coming down widin a few feet of me?"

She was lifted up with some trouble, and she stared before her in a half-frightened manner, her ears bent down to catch the first sound of the Elevation bell. Then, when its faint tinkle struck her senses, and her fancy pictured the white Host raised above her head, she broke out into a rhapsody of praise; this time in the Gaelic language, which seems to have been formed to make prayer into poetry, and poetry into prayer. And every stanza of this sublime prayer, sung as it were in rhythmic assonance, concluded with that first verse of "The Lay of the Sacred Heart," probably the most beautiful sacred poem, after the Hebrew melodies, that was ever chanted by the human heart.

The Love of my heart is Thy Heart, O Saviour dear,

My treasure untold is to hold Thy Heart in my fond heart here.

For, ah! it is known that Thine Own overflows with true love for me:

Then within the love-locked door

Of my heart's inmost core

Let Thy Heart ever guarded be!

This rhythmical rapture went on up to the time of receiving Holy Communion. When she heard the bell ringing as the priest turned around with the Sacred Species in his hands, she almost lost herself in an agony of penitence and humility. Again and again she put up her withered left-hand, as if to ward off her God from coming nigh her, while she smote her breast, muttering with a tone of heart-breaking compunction:

"Lord, I am not worthy Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but say only the word, and my soul shall be healed."

At last, crying out "O Thierna! O Thierna! O Thierna!" she received the Holy Communion, and then sank back, silent and happy, on her pillows.

What the thoughts and emotions of the grave, stern theologian were, whilst the poor, illiterate woman poured out her soul in such accents of fear and love and holy hope, it might be difficult to conjecture, but the following Sunday at first Mass he seemed to have the scene described above in his mind, when he said, with more feeling than he ever manifested before:

"They are going, my dearly-beloved brethren, they are going — this mighty race of men and women, who lived by faith, and their vision of eternity. Like some old weather-beaten oaks that have survived a hundred years of storms, or like those solitary cairns on your mountains that mark the graves of kings, a few remain, scattered, here and there, in lonely hamlet or village, to remind us, a puny race, of what our forefathers were. We have amongst us a good many pretty pieties; in fact we are bewildered by all these luxuries of devotion. But where — oh! where is the mighty faith, the deep heartfelt compunction, the passionate love, the divine tenderness of these old Irish saints? You have nice prayer-books now, in velvet and ivory bindings; but have you the melodious and poetic prayers of men and women who never learned to read a line? You have silver-mounted rosaries rolling through your kid-gloved fingers. Give me the old horn or ivory beads, strung upon a thread, and fondled by fingers roughened, hardened, and consecrated by honest toil. You bow down your hats and bonnets at the Elevation. I'd rather see one gray head bending in salutation to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. For, beneath those old silvered heads were brains that knew and penetrated, by divine Faith, into every mystery of our Holy Religion; and beneath those shawls, frayed and worn, beat hearts that were true to God, true to His Church, true to His priests and true to their country. Aye," he cried, as he remembered his

own trials, past and present, amongst them, "you are not as your forefathers were! You are a superficial, cunning, selfish, and tricky race, and in your lust after gold, you are traitors to your fellow-men, and liars before God. You are no more like your forefathers than the cawing rook, that steals and screams above the elm trees, is like the lordly eagle that scales the mountain-sides, and looks fearlessly into the eyes of the everlasting sun!"

They shrugged their shoulders, and going out put up their new French parasols, and smiled angrily, and shook their heads, and said:

"No wonder we hate him! He has never a good word to say to us!"

The first time Dr. William Gray said Mass in that humble home, the old woman insisted on two conditions being observed — he was to stay to breakfast, and to receive a half-sovereign, nothing less, from the granddaughter. When she tried to force money on him, he blazed out into a sudden fury:

"How dare you?" he cried, "how dare you offer me money? You, a poor girl, slaving and toiling from morning to night for a pittance — you, who stay up to one o'clock in the morning to earn two-pence for a shirt, and a half-penny for a collar, to offer me — gold — yes, gold! Now, mark, I like to come here. It does me good! But, if you ever dare to offer money again, I shall quit this house for ever!"

Frightened and abashed, the girl began to cry.

"My grandmother will kill me," she said, "if she hears I didn't give it to you!"

"Well, then, give it to me," he said.

He took the coin and handed it back.

"Now you can say with truth you gave it to me. You're not bound to say that I returned it. And now, I'll stay for breakfast to make friends again with you; but this must be the first and last time."

She had a breakfast fit for a king — roast chickens, ham, cold tongue, toast, cakes, tea. She had invited a few of the neighbours to "discoorse the priest"; but they fought shy of the honour. They probably thought they would have better appetites at home.

This morning, old Betty Lane put the usual questions to her granddaughter, which were answered with equivocations. Then she said:

"Is the priest gone yet?"

"No!" he said. "I'm here. I want to ask you a few questions."

"Yerra! is it me?" she said.

"Yes!" he said. "I want your advice."

"Advice?" she cried in her harsh, strident voice, "Yerra, what advice could a poor angashore like me be giving to the minister of the Lord God?"

"Never mind!" he said. "But just listen, and hear what I have to say."

"Go on!" she said in her usual abrupt manner.

"I had a sister, Helena," he said, "much younger than myself. She went to America, many years ago."

"Yerra, what took her to America?" shouted the old woman. "Sure, ye wor always a dacent family, and well off!"

"It was I that sent her!" he replied. "I found some fault with her — it wasn't much; just as a flighty, but innocent young girl would commit, and I judged her harshly!"

"Ah, yes!" interrupted the old woman, "your tongue is worse than yer heart. And you're hasty. That's what sets the people agin you so much."

"Well," he continued, "she died lately in America; and she left it in her will that I should take charge of her child — a girl!"

"Begor, that was quare," said the old woman, "but I suppose she had a tie in you still; and she thought you would make up for your thratement of herself."

"Probably," he replied. "But now, I want to know

what am I to do? It is one of those cases where two heads are better than one!"

"Yes," she said, "when wan is lighter than the other. But what did you do?"

"I wrote straightaway to the priest who had written to me, to say that a priest's house was no place to bring up a young girl in. Let her go to some convent, or orphanage, and I would pay for her."

"Well, an' then?" she said.

"Well, you see," said the stern man, with a break in his voice, which she did not fail to notice, "the image of my poor sister will come up before me — her face the day I last saw her in my mother's house, because I refused to say good-bye in my own; her sickness in America in a public hospital, her wasting away in the fever of consumption, her looking with her dying eyes across the water to me to protect her child, her last words —"

Here the strong man broke down, and could not go further. The old woman, in her deafness, was aware of it all.

"Praise be to You, the Father of all," she said, "an' they say this man has a hard heart!"

Presently, he pulled himself together and proceeded:

"On the other hand, you know, Betty, that I am a solitary man, accustomed to be alone, hating the face of visitors; and I see what an upset it will be to me if I bring a young girl with all her little wants and troubles into my house. And then I have trouble enough with cross and venomous parishioners without bringing on fresh anxieties. And," he added, as a final stroke, "I am not young now!"

There was silence in the room for fully five minutes before the old woman spoke. She was rolling her beads between her fingers, and looking out into the darkness that surrounded her, trying to pierce those white barriers that stopped the light of Heaven from penetrating through the little narrow tunnels of her eyes. Then she spoke:

"You said you wrote to that priest?"

"Yes!" he replied. "On the spur of the moment I wrote, and refused to accept the responsibility of caring for that child."

"And you wor right," she said, emphatically. "Haven't you your own childre' to mind, the people that God gave you? Aren't you their father, and aren't they your childre'? Av coorse, they are bad and good, cross and quiet, idle and lazy and industhrous; but they are yours, yours; an' you can't throw 'em over for the sthranger."

"Just my own view," he said, rising up to depart, and wondering at the spiritual and supernatural view which this poor, illiterate woman took of a matter that had only presented itself to him in a material light.

"Av coorse, they say," she continued, "that blood is thicker than wather, but there's another sayin', 'A priesht once is a priesht forever'; and don't you ever forget it."

"Good-bye!" he said, grasping her bony fingers in his strong palm.

"Good-bye and good luck!" she cried. "An' thry an' keep your face always turned to the Lord. Don't mind anny wan else!"

CHAPTER IV

A DEPUTATION

DURING all his years as curate Dr. William Gray had been looking forward to the time when, emancipated from the ordinary drudgery of missionary life, he would have abundant leisure to devote to those beloved studies that were to him more entrancing than the lightest literature is to the modern reader. He used to dream of a snug library or study, with a southerly aspect, for, like all highly strung and nervous temperaments, he sought for the exaltation of sunshine, and dreaded the depression of a dark room with a northern window, never warmed or hallowed by a blessed sun-ray. That room should be warmly carpeted, its walls lined with books, leather-bound, denoting the strength and stress of thought that lay within. There should be a desk, on which writing materials might lie, ready to hand, for although he had never written anything as yet, he hoped to overcome that dread or shyness of print which seems to be the *damnosa hereditas* of the Irish priesthood. And it should be well warmed in winter, particularly at night, when he could shut out all aspect of human things and bury himself in the luxuries of free and unfettered thought about the vast mysteries of religion and humanity. Above all, this library was to be sound-proof and care-proof, that is, not a single worry or care that might stretch a nerve too tightly was to be allowed to pass the threshold of that door. For Dr. William Gray had found that care and worry stretch the *dura mater* of the brain much more seriously than speculations upon the Trinity; and he wisely argued that it is not only a criminal waste of brain

tissue, but also a futile and fruitless waste, to worry with feverish anxiety about such wretched human trifles, which, as a rule, manage to settle themselves into some harmony by the simple process of being let severely alone.

But this was a dream of youth; and alas, how few of our youthful dreams are realized! True, here was the library with its southern aspect, through whose windows the level wintry sun was now shooting cold and ghastly streamers of pale light. And here were his books, a goodly number, some calf-bound, some new and haughty with their vellum and gold bindings, and disdaining the companionship of their antique and plebeian comrades. And here was the writing-desk, just as he had imagined it, solid in Spanish mahogany, with a massive ink-stand and a goodly array of pens and large sheets of white and blue foolscap; but alas! these last were virgin pages still. Because the chamber was not sound-proof, nor shadow-proof, nor care-proof; and the stately priest had to admit that he had used up more brain-power in worry than in work, and that that long line of white that lay on the carpet from wall to wall across the room represented not syllogisms, but suggestions, mostly futile, to disentangle himself from those horrid webs of circumstance that will weave themselves around the most lonely lives.

And if all those walls could speak, and echo back, like the modern phonograph, the words that escaped the lips of this haughty and irritable and honourable man, as he dwelt betimes on some fresh instance of human perversity or depravity, what a strange tale would they tell! For the overcharged brain or heart must speak to some one, or break; must put into the dress of speech the naked and turbulent thought, which will burst its barriers if imprisoned. But, perhaps the most poignant of all the sounds they would utter, would be the *Woe! Woe!* over lost time; over the opportunities for sound study and scholarship wasted; over the little wounds inflicted, very often in mere wantonness or thoughtlessness, by a people whose nerves were steelled against sensitiveness by the

hardships they had to face. For though they feared him, they knew that there are ways to fret the lion and exhaust him; and every harsh word he uttered was repaid by some subtle annoyance that fell and struck its barbs into his soul. And his vast learning and reputation as a theologian, and his more secret repute as at heart a kind and generous and honourable man, had but little effect. These things do not count for much when nerves are raw under a castigation, and hard things are uttered from lip to lip — the echo of hard words uttered in the holy place.

Of course, these things were not universal, nor even general. They were limited to one or two families, with whom he had come into contact at first, and who with the old Pagan pertinacity of their race refused to forgive or forget. The vast body of his parishioners were humble, not too devout people, whose eyes were so accustomed to search the earth for what it would yield them that their sight failed when they looked too much toward Heaven. But, as is usual everywhere, these kept aloof. They stood on the ditch and watched. What was it to them if the pastor chose to say a hard thing sometimes? And what was it to them if a few turbulent and sullen peasants stood aloof from him, and threw their little poisoned darts into the very sanctuary itself?

But I am only proving that a care-proof house has not yet been patented. Science has not invented such; and although our good physicians are fond of instructing their patients not to worry, I am not aware that any skilful chemist as yet has discovered the secret of getting the acids and alkalies of life together without hissing at each other.

This morning, however, as Dr. William Gray rode slowly homeward from the house of Betty Lane, he felt some singular relief from the load of pain and anxiety that generally weighed upon him. His own prompt action, so emphatically endorsed by the spiritual foresight of that holy, if ignorant woman, had settled at

once, and without putting to too much trial that exercise of judgment which he so much feared, the question of his niece. He was quite determined now to close down the doors of his mind on any repetition of that problem. He would dismiss it. That was all.

The exercise of riding in the clear, frosty air, the relief of mind he experienced, seemed to give him quite an unusual appetite, and he greatly astonished his old house-keeper at dinner by saying that he thought he would try a second egg. It was so unusual, so portentous a request, that the good woman was alarmed. It looked like the approach of death, or some fatal disease, like cancer or consumption, or perhaps that *wolf*, which, in the minds of the Irish peasantry, is supposed to inhabit the inside of any delicate person who develops an unusual appetite. Then he took up the morning paper; and in reading of the follies and woes of the world outside, he almost forgot his own, and experienced that glow of satisfaction which comes from a sense of security, or immunity from the graver cares that seem to beset and waylay humanity.

Suddenly a series of shadows, flung on the wall before him, struck him with a sense of impending evil. He heard the loud, single knock that generally does not prelude mere visits of ceremony; he heard his house-keeper whispering in the hall, and he knew she was marshalling the unknown visitors into the parlour at the opposite side. Then she came and told him with the happy indifference of those who are not concerned with such troubles that "he was wanted."

"Who wants me?" he said brusquely.

"Some people from the parish," she said.

"Ask them their business," he ordered, and tried to resume his reading of the paper.

In a minute she returned with the message:

"They says, yer Reverence, they must see yerself!"

He rose up unwillingly, thought a little, took a pinch of snuff, made a gallant attempt to control his rising temper, and crossed the hall.

There were six men of the peasant class, and two women in the room. They had arranged themselves in a semicircle; and their mud-covered boots had already left their brown and yellow stains on the carpet. The priest stood in front of them without saying a word. He was fully a head above the tallest man present; and as he craned his neck forward, and ran his gray eye along the line of faces, their eyes fell down before him, and the men twirled their caps in fright. After a pause, he said:

"Well? You want me?"

There wasn't a word spoken. The women at last nudged the men, and whispered:

"Can't ye spake?"

"Come," said the priest. "I cannot wait. My time is precious. If you have no business to transact, you had better go!"

"'Tis about the schoolmaster at Athboy," at length one found his tongue to say. "We wants your Reverence to remove him."

"Do you refer to the principal teacher," he asked ominously, "or to the assistant?"

"'Tis the young man we don't want," was the reply.

"'Tis Carmody we want sent away."

"Very good," said the priest. "Now specify your complaints against him."

"We has no complaints agen himself," was the reply.

"'Tis on account of his uncle."

"The grabber," said another of the deputation, *sotto voce*.

"Now, Murphy," said the priest, turning sharply on the delinquent, "I shall put you outside the door, if you won't conduct yourself."

"I again repeat the question," said the priest, his brows contracting still more sternly. "Specify your charges or complaints against the assistant-teacher."

"We have nothin' to say agen the young man hisself," the spokesman repeated, "but we won't have the nephew of his uncle in our schools."

"In *your* schools?" echoed the priest. "And, when and how, pray, did they become *your* property?"

"They're the property of the parish," said the man —

"Yes! and I'm parish priest," repeated Dr. William Gray. "Yes, do you understand, I am the parish priest, and therefore legal Trustee, Owner, and Manager of these schools, so long as I remain here. Furthermore, I shall appoint and dismiss my teachers, according to their agreements, without consulting you or anybody else in this parish. And" — he added with slow emphasis — "I shall not dismiss Mr. Carmody, until he gives me righteous reason for doing so. Now, go!"

He waved his hand toward the door, and they filed out, one by one, in silence. As he closed the door, he heard some muttering:

"He'll hear more of this, begor!"

He knew it. But he cared not. After all, it is a great matter to know that, when you have to fight, your back is against the wall of some great principle.

The next evening the principal of the school came to say that the school was deserted, except for the presence of six or seven Protestant boys.

Dr. William Gray rode over the next morning to study the situation. He was annoyed and grieved over this new assertion of popular rights; but he was not anxious, because he saw clearly before him down along the path of duty, and there was none of that balancing of judgment that is the worst element in mortal wear and tear. It is very trying to be perplexed. It costs nothing to endure. And, if sometimes the thought of such baseness and perfidy as were now at work in his parish, sent the hot blood leaping up to the brain of the priest, he put his finger on the arteries and bade them stand still, for human perversity and depravity were, alas! now to be taken as part of the programme of life.

When he entered the long low room, where usually sat some seventy or eighty pupils, the sense of the desolation smote him. Here was half his parish in open rebel-

lion; and here was the practical instance of the foul teaching that was given to the rising generation.

There were six boys present. Two of these were the sons of a Doctor Wycherly, a retired naval surgeon, who had a small property in the parish. The elder of the two was a tall, fine lad about sixteen years old. His fair handsome face was freckled; but the browning and burning of summer suns and seas had yielded to the blanching of winter, and there was an ominous whiteness under the eyes that seemed to hint at some delicacy of constitution. His brother was a more robust lad of thirteen or fourteen years, a bright, alert figure already foredestined by Nature and Fate to find his fortune on the seas.

The other boys were children of coast guards, whose flagpole, mast and yards and pennon could just be seen rising over the chine of the hill behind the school, although very far away.

The principal came forward when the priest entered, and saluted him. The latter briefly acknowledged the salutation, and then asked where was Mr. Carmody.

Mr. Carmody had been down at the end of the school behind the blackboard. He felt that he, in some unconscious manner, was a delinquent, not a victim — the involuntary cause of much trouble in a dangerous place. When called, he came forward.

In his abrupt, imperious manner, Dr. Gray interrogated him.

“Your uncle took this evicted farm?”

“Yes, sir,” he said. “I know very little about him. He never wrote to my father the whole time he was in America; and we have seen little of him since he came home. But the Slatterys, who were evicted, and whose passage was paid to America by their children, came and implored him to take the place off their hands and let them go away.”

“Well?” said the priest.

“He gave them,” continued Carmody, “as well as we can understand, the full value of their interest, four

hundred pounds, I believe; and they gave him up all rights. He had some trouble with the landlord, who wanted him to pay up all arrears of rent before giving possession; but this he refused."

"Well?" said the priest.

"The Slatterys cleared out; my uncle went in; and instantly the cry of 'Grabber' was raised."

"By whom?"

"By the Duggans, who have the next farm to this, and who were watching night and day, till they could get the Slatterys away."

"Did they offer for the place?"

"Yes, sir. My uncle can prove that the Duggans wanted to purchase the interest for a hundred pounds — a quarter of what the farm was worth; but the Slatterys wouldn't give up. Then the Duggans hoped to tire them out, or starve them out; but the unfortunate people held on until my uncle came to the rescue."

"I see it all now," said the priest. "I had heard something of all this; but I wanted to see it confirmed."

"There's one thing more, sir," said Carmody. "You were good enough to appoint me here as assistant. Now, I don't want to give you trouble, or to be the occasion of dissension in this parish. If you like, I shall resign my place here; and perhaps —"

"You are at perfect liberty, Mr. Carmody," said the priest sternly, "to send in your resignation at any time you please; but, mark me, I shall never ask you to do so, until you give personal and adequate cause. I am here to maintain two principles, — one, my rights, as manager, to appoint and dismiss my teachers, altogether independent of public opinion; the other, to do ordinary justice to you. If you wish to run away, the gap is open."

He turned away, and accosted the principal teacher.

"Do these young Wycherlys possess any brains?"

He was well known to have no love for Protestants, and he had never noticed the boys before.

"The older boy, Jack," the teacher said, "is a lad of promise. Dion is idle, except when he's in a boat."

"Call up the elder boy!" the priest said.

Jack Wycherly came up in an easy, lounging way, and stood before the priest, looking up into his face in that calm fearless manner which these young lads possess. There was just one little patch of pink on his cheek, sent there by the unusual emotion excited by the unusual summons.

"What book are you reading?" said the priest gruffly.

"Sixth book," said the boy.

"Bring it here!"

The boy brought the book, after exchanging a smile with his companions, who were staring and wondering with all their might.

"Open, and read anywhere you please!"

The boy opened the book, and read on fluently and with intelligence.

"Do you see that word 'colossal'?" said the priest.

"What does it mean, and what is the derivation?"

The boy promptly gave both.

"That'll do! How far have you gone in Euclid and Algebra?"

"Sixth Book of Euclid and Quadratic Equations," was the reply.

"You're nearly finished here," said the priest. "What do you propose to do then?"

"Father says I'm to go to the Queen's or Trinity," said the boy.

"But you can't matriculate in either without Latin and Greek," said the priest.

"No, sir," said the boy. "Father says I must go to a grinder in Cork."

"Would you rather learn Latin and Greek at home?"

"Certainly," said the boy. "I'm sure father would prefer my remaining here to taking lodgings in Cork."

"All right then. I'll teach you Latin and Greek. You'll matriculate quite easily next term. Come down

to my house to-night, and bring your brother with you. You need no books. I'll supply them. And tell your father that your religion will not be tampered with."

"Thank you, sir," said the boy, who was flattered, although he was not too well pleased at the invitation.

When the Rev. Dr. Gray reached home he found his young curate before him in a white flame of indignation. Father Henry Liston was a young man who wasted no time, but when he had a certain thing to do, he did it with all his might. Hence, the very moment his predecessor had got his little household goods under weigh Henry installed his belongings. And it was whilst he was busy in breaking open cases, and unloosing the ropes of crates, and hauling in furniture of divers sorts, that he fully realized what had been said to him about a certain row that was just then engaging the attention of his parish priest. Bit by bit, as he gathered the information from the people about the place, he soon realized the infamy of the whole proceeding. It would have had a depressing effect on a more selfish mind, which would forebode unhappy things from such an initial trouble. But Henry Liston was still young and generous. He had not learned the caution and selfishness of age. He only saw what seemed to him an affair of perfidy and malice; and he flamed up with all that righteous indignation that such minds feel before they have learned to bank the fires of youth with the ashes of experience. His indignation completely overbore his dread of his pastor, as he said:

"This is a shocking thing, sir, I have just heard about these scoundrels. I never heard anything like it before. I got a hint of it; but never dreamed these fellows would take it so far."

"Sit down," said his pastor, secretly pleased at such sympathy. "What have you heard?"

"Simply that these ruffians — Duggans, I think — want to stir up the parish against you because you won't dismiss Carmody. And it appears that these ineffable

scoundrels actually moved heaven and earth to get that place which Carmody's uncle paid the highest price for."

"You appear to be surprised!" said the pastor, handing him his snuff-box, a token of friendship and admiration.

"Surprised?" said Henry, sneezing violently. "I should say I was. And a good deal more than surprised. Why it is the most base and dastardly thing I ever heard of."

"It only shows your inexperience," said his pastor. "In a few years more, when you have seen a little of missionary life, you will be surprised at nothing."

"But, surely," said Henry, shuffling in his chair, and trying to keep back that abominable sneezing, "surely these scoundrels cannot have such a following in the parish. Surely, every decent man would condemn and repudiate sympathy with such fellows!"

"You visited the schools?" said the pastor.

"Yes, I did," said Henry.

"How many boys were present?"

"Yes, yes, I know," said the curate. "But I suppose the people don't understand. They are misled and deceived by this parrot-cry of 'Grabber.'"

The pastor shook his head.

"They are misled by their own base cowardice and pusillanimity," he said. "There's not a single man amongst them capable of a manly action."

"Well, all I know is this," said Henry, rising. "I'll meet them for the first time on Sunday next; and if the old walls of Athboy Chapel don't reverberate with such a philippic on their baseness and cowardice as they never heard before, call me Davy!"

"You intend to denounce them?" said his parish priest gravely.

"Denounce them? It isn't denouncing, but such a blistering, blinding tornado of vituperation that they'll remember it long after Henry Liston has left them for ever!"

"Sit down!" said his pastor, taking a huge pinch of snuff and stretching his broad fingers out like a fan.

"Now, next Sunday, you'll preach on the Gospel of the day. And — not one word — not even one — that could be construed into the slightest allusion to this wretched affair. Do you quite understand me?"

"I do, of course, sir," said Henry Liston, gasping. "But you don't mean to muzzle me in that way? I can quite understand that you mightn't care to lower yourself to their level, sir. But, surely, I can do it with impunity, as I am not immediately concerned."

"That's all very good," said his pastor gravely, "but you'll take my orders, and that ends the matter. Not one word, mind, that can even be construed into an allusion to this affair. Not one word, do you understand?"

"I do, of course, sir," said his curate. "But 'tis hard lines to have to leave these scoundrels go scot-free."

"Leave that to me!" said his pastor. "I think I know how to deal with them. Are you settling down?"

"Yes!" said the curate. "I've got over my few sticks to-day, and am pushing them up as quick as I can."

"I should have asked you to remain here until you had finally settled down," said his pastor. "But I thought," he said with a smile, "that you mightn't feel comfortable."

"Oh! I am all right over there," said Henry gaily. "I rigged up a bed last night and slept like a top."

He didn't say that his mattress was on the floor, and that a crate of books was his washing-stand.

"Well, perhaps it is just as well," said his pastor. "You are making some improvements and alterations, I suppose. All young men do. They find infinite room in a parish for all kinds of material and spiritual ameliorations. Nothing was ever done right before they came; and everything will go to the dogs when they leave. But have you made up your mind as to what you'd require in the curate's house?"

Henry had been turning over in his mind during those

few minutes the possibility of being thus challenged; and the probability that never again would there come a more propitious moment for the furtherance of his claims. And yet so tender was his instinct of honour that he shrank from placing before his pastor the list of improvements he had drawn up. He dreaded the possible suspicion that his pastor might think that all his new-born zeal was influenced by base and sordid motives.

"I have drawn up a list, sir," said he. "But I don't intend to present it now. There is abundance of time later on."

The old man watched the young face eagerly. Then he said:

"Have you the list about you?"

With his face crimsoned with blushes, Henry drew forth with trembling hand the list of improvements he had devised, and put it before his pastor. The latter took it, laid it on a writing-desk, took an enormous pinch of snuff between his fingers and began to read.

CHAPTER V

ROHIRA

WHILST this interview was in progress, there was an earnest debate going on at Rohira, the home of the Wycherlys. Rohira was a plain, two-story building, with unusually large, high windows, and it swept into a semi-circular apse where it rested on the outer edge of a rather abrupt and precipitous terrace (that had been artificially raised behind the hill that commanded the swamps and sea-marshes of Athboy), and on a slope of fields and gardens that gently undulated toward the sea. It commanded a magnificent prospect, for the broken coast swept outward in huge cliffs toward the ocean, and the house could be seen for miles, its white walls shining against the hill behind it, and the great sweep of upland throwing it into greater relief in front.

Dr. Wycherly was a retired naval surgeon, who had dipped in his ocean voyages into every kind of quaint and picturesque bight and bay across the world; and had now come to settle down on a few ancestral acres that were worth but little from an agricultural standpoint, but were dear because they were ancestral, and because they bore the magical name of "property." The huge hall held many indications of the past history and tastes of its owner. Great dried skins of snakes festooned the walls, where these latter were not covered with Oriental tapestries; and every vacant coign and nook had hung beneath it quaint old-fashioned rifles and muskets and swords, gathered from natives in mart and market from Corea to Ceylon. Each had its own label, in parchment, indicating its use or history; and sometimes the owner

would expatiate to visitors about such things, and bring to his aid all the vast experience he had acquired by dealings with the more exclusive and therefore more intelligent denizens of the East. On the right of the large hall was the drawing-room, which of late years had become rather a library. This, too, was stocked with Oriental curiosities; and cases of books, ancient and ponderous in heavy dark bindings, contested for place with long narrow portraits in oils of soldiers and sailors, presumably the ancestors of the present owner. On the left was the dining-room. A heavy massive mahogany dining-table; massive dining-room chairs; a few horse-hair sofas and a large oak dumb-waiter were the only furniture here.

Dr. Wycherly himself, a tall, straight, angular man of sixty years or more, had more the aspect of an artist than of a doctor. And in his library, when he wore his rather faded black velvet jacket, his keen, sharp features, long gray hair, well-trimmed beard, and easy, voluptuous, undulating movements, took hold of the imagination and transferred this remote and reserved man into a society-artist on his holidays.

He was very popular in the neighbourhood for many reasons. First, because he had come of an ancient family in that district; and here and there were retainers or children, or grand-children of retainers, who kept up the traditional devotion and respect even for families that had decayed. Then, he was very kind, gave gratuitous services to the poor, pulled troublesome teeth, cured white swellings and consumption, blistered for colds, etc. And it was whispered that he had a cure for cancer which he had brought back from the East, — a decoction of certain "errubs," which he alone knew, and which he had to gather under moonlight, and only when the first faint sickle of the moon appeared, and unseen by human eyes. The local doctor was very mad about it all; and talked of quacks and charlatans and madmen, roaming about strange, uncanny places at night, and holding

nocturnal conferences with people whose past was mysterious and present more than suspicious.

There were some slight grounds for these allusions, uncharitable as they were. The Doctor was eccentric. Some went further and said that at the death of his wife he had grieved so much that he had become temporarily insane. And a slight remnant of that mental revolution still clung around him in the shape of a delusion that his wife would come back some day and remain with him; and that in the meantime she did accompany him in her spirit-form everywhere, occasionally revealing herself to him in one guise or another. This illusion was increased by a singular discovery he had made some years after the death of his wife.

Far down along the coast-line, where the sea-cliffs rose abruptly, a fiord, narrow and sinuous, cut deep into the land, sometimes broadening into yellow sands, sometimes narrowing into gloomy fissures, which a stag might leap; and two high rocks, like the Calpe and Abila of the ancients, guarded the entrance, and tried to break the huge seas that came on laughing and revelling in their strength, and swept through the grim portals, and felt all round the walls of the fiord, and broke in anger on the sands, and passed up to the furthest limits, where they sometimes leaped their barriers, and took a trophy from the moss-covered summit.

On the very outer spur of one of these guardian rocks there was perched a tall and stately ruin of an ancient castle. Unlike most of these ruins, the upper stories still remained, and here and there projecting battlements were sustained by heavy buttresses, whilst the lower parts of the castle were still quite integral in door and sunken window and limestone courses that ran all around the walls marking off the different landings. It was known far and wide as Dunkerrin Castle; and there was a tradition that it was not so long uninhabited; but had been within the century at least the eyrie of a gang of sea-rovers, or half-pirates, which had only been broken

up when English war-vessels skirted the coast on the look-out for Hoche and his invading fleet.

In this gloomy, wind-swept, and sometimes sea-lashed castle, Dr. Wycherly, immediately after his wife's death, and when he was no longer under restraint, spent his days. He said the place was haunted by his wife's spirit; that there she met him, and revealed herself to him; and that there finally they would be reunited and would live happily together for evermore. A rather singular discovery accentuated this delusion. He was prowling around one of the lower rooms of the old castle one dreary winter day. The wind was howling through the open windows, and occasionally a flake of foam, or a spurt of sea-spray was lifted up from beneath and deposited on floor or window-sill. It was just the day he thought when his wife's spirit would come in from the sea and seek shelter there. So he roamed around, dreaming, watching, hoping, until, tired of seeking for spirits, his mind came back to earth, and he noticed a strong, oaken, iron-knobbed and plated door in one of the walls. It is possible he had seen it a hundred times before; but, absorbed in his own dreaming, he had not paid much attention to it. This day, under some sudden impulse he clambered up, and shook the door violently. To his surprise it yielded, and revealed a long, low, narrow passage, quite dark, and leading he knew not whither. Full of the idea that it might reveal something, he hastened home, procured candles and a short rope, and hurried back. The oaken door had swung to again; but this only confirmed the insane idea that spirits were at work there to debar him from finding his treasure. He flung the door back violently, clambered on hands and feet along the passage, until the former touched an edge, and then wandered in air, and he knew he had reached the end. Lighting a candle, he slung it on the rope and let it down. It descended slowly without being extinguished and he knew the air was pure; and from the dim reflection he saw a narrow chamber, framed around

with undashed and uncemented walls. Slowly withdrawing the candle, and placing it on the edge of the chamber, he let himself down gently until he touched the floor of stone. He looked around. There was nothing to be seen. But just as he had sighed a sigh of despair, he saw in one corner a long, narrow box, tied round with wire that had long since rusted. He raised the box. It was light, as if empty. He was just able by straining a little to place it on the edge near the candle; and then he drew himself up, groped along the narrow passage again, and emerged into the large chamber of the castle.

Hurrying home with his treasure, and afraid that some one would see him, he hastened to his bedroom, undid the rusty wire that easily snapped beneath his fingers, and raised the cover. Then were revealed to his wondering eyes some long, fair tresses of a woman's hair, apparently in a state of perfect preservation, and exhaling a faint perfume, and on them was laid a letter. For some time he stood entranced before this message from the grave; and then with trembling fingers he took up the long coils of hair and tried to weave them around his fingers. They snapped asunder at once, and seemed to fall into golden dust. He took the letter. It broke in his fingers. Holding the fragments to the light, he thought he discerned some faint appearance of handwriting: but, bit by bit, the paper or parchment crumbled in his hands, and dissolved, like the hair, into dust. He sat for a time pondering, dreaming, exulting over this strange missive. Then he sighed, drew down the cover on the golden dust and fastened it securely; placed it in a cabinet as something altogether sacred, a shrine where he could worship daily. But his visits to the old castle might be said to have ceased from that day.

Apart from this monomania, Dr. Wycherly was altogether a sane being. In all the other affairs of life he was a sensible, although not a shrewd man. He had no talent for business matters, and his land was not productive. He was wrapped up in his science, and in his

benevolence; passing easily from his books to the service of the poor, who thronged his hall, and who presented a lugubrious spectacle enough with all kinds of bandages and wraps, and malodorous from iodoform and creosote, which he plentifully lavished upon them.

He had altogether the character of a benevolent madman, for, apart altogether from his illusions about his wife, it was taken as a certain sign of mental trouble, even by those who were his beneficiaries, that he should expend skill and medicine without ever exacting a fee.

Hence when a band of strolling gypsies (who had strayed into the parish, and who just as they were reaping a bountiful harvest by the telling of fortunes and the stealing of hens and such other portable property, had been summarily expelled from the parish by the vigorous denunciations of the priests), left behind them in some rancorous quarrel a few of their tribe, these had no difficulty in taking possession of the old castle, and settling there as permanent inmates. In fact, they did not ask permission; for the first indication of their presence was a wreath of smoke from some long-disused chimney. They were then summarily called to account, made the most obsequious apologies, appealed to the well-known benevolence of Dr. Wycherly, protested that they had come there from far-off and unknown places at the invitation of his deceased wife, and were left thenceforward undisturbed.

This family consisted of a woman, apparently about sixty years of age, but tall and sinewy and strong, as if each decade had but lightly left its mark upon her. She was very sallow of complexion, and two deep lines that ran from eye to lip on either side gave her a sinister expression, which was emphasized by the bold, fearless gaze of eyes that never seemed to wink or flinch or fall before the eye of mortal. There was a brood of dusky children, ranging from a babe of twelve months to a girl of twelve years, — all swarthy and dirty and ill-kept, but healthy and hardy from eternal exposure to sun and wind and

rain. Their father was a man of thirty, a lithe, vigorous, active fellow, who after his arrival at Dunkerrin Castle seemed to spend his life in his boat, watching his lobster beds in summer, and earning a decent livelihood by pulling out and hailing outward-bound and home-bound vessels, and selling his ugly freight at very handsome prices. In winter, or during his idle summer and autumn days, he went about mending kettles or earthenware for the farmers, or he worked for Dr. Wycherly in the fields or around the house for moderate wages, and appeared to be an industrious and skilful man.

Notwithstanding all this appearance of harmlessness and good-will, strange stories about this uncanny lot began to wander around. Judith, the woman, very soon acquired an unsavoury reputation, not only for fortune-telling, which was rather an attractive accomplishment for the farmers' and labourers' daughters all around the locality, and the servants in the houses of the gentry; but she was credited with the dread supernatural powers of the evil eye, with all its usual accompaniments of pishogues, sterilized milk, cattle-maiming, etc. She had been sternly denounced for her evil practices by the parish priest, for which she stored up in her dark mind many a legacy of hate and revenge; but her power over the peasantry remained unquestioned, and Jude the Witch became a formidable factor for evil in the parish.

All this power for evil, too, was accentuated by the now frequent apparitions of the Doctor's deceased wife in and around Dunkerrin Castle. Sometimes she appeared at one of the windows looking toward the upland fields and the hill; sometimes she appeared on the very crest of the castle battlements, a tall, thin, shadowy figure, standing out against the dark background of the sea like a statue of white marble. Sometimes, the fishermen, coming back from the mackerel grounds, saw a boat, propelled by neither sail, nor scull, nor oar, nor earthly hand, but there always was that white figure standing in the stern. And sometimes they saw another boat,

not built like their coracles, but much stronger and more seaworthy, and it seemed to be driven by no human hand up the dark defile of waters, and fire gleamed around its prows, and flames shone in its wake. And it seemed to be projected out of the side of a great hulk, that would loom suddenly out of the darkness, and as quickly disappear; and no voice of hail or warning was ever heard, nor did the waves suck round its prow, and there was no flap of canvas, nor creak of mast, but such silence on the seas as comes not from mortal man or duly registered schooner or brigantine. And so everything in and around Dunkerrin Castle and the more modern Rohira mansion was gradually wrapped in a sombre mist of mystery; and the superstitious peasantry all along the coast, and far into the interior of the country, had long since decided that it were wise to give such places and people a wide berth, and as much sea-room as possible.

When the two boys reached home in the growing dusk of that December afternoon, and had sat down to dinner, they could hardly explain to their father the surprising offer made by the priest in the school that day.

"Yes, I understand he is an exceedingly clever man," said Dr. Wycherly, musing on the strange proposition, "an exceedingly clever man. But it is a singular invitation, a singular invitation."

"Well, you see, Pap," said Jack Wycherly, "you won't teach us Latin, though I've asked you a hundred times; and you don't want to let us go away, as long as you can help it. And I'm getting pretty advanced. Dion can wait —"

"Can I, indeed?" said Dion, with his mouth full. "I tell you I can't wait. I don't know what good is Latin or Greek to me, because I'll be captain of a ship, or nothing. But perhaps Dr. Gray would coach me in science. These old chaps know everything. You see they have nothing to do but read, read, read."

"You mustn't speak in that way of a clergyman," said

his father, mildly expostulating. "It's not right, my boy, no matter what persuasion they belong to."

"Oh, I meant no harm, Pap," said Dion. "But I know that this old — old clergyman is awfully fond of Mensuration and Euclid and these things. I saw him teaching a young fellow how to measure the whole school-ground with his eye. The master taped it afterwards, and it was right to the inch."

"Yes!" said his father gravely. "But the question is now, what right have we to trespass on this clergyman's time? It is very good of him to make the offer —"

"Oh, so far as that," said Jack Wycherly, "I guess he's only doing it to fret the Catholics who are kicking against him. The boys were all kept away to-day; and I suppose they won't come now till after the Christmas holidays."

"Why?" said his father. "What's up now? Has he got a new fight on his hands?"

"Yes! They want him to dismiss the teacher, because his uncle took the farm here at Crossfields. He says he won't dismiss him. They say he must, and no thanks."

"I think you'd better let us go, Dad," said Dion. "It will be rare fun, studying with such a schoolmaster, though I suppose he'll lick the life out of us. They say he's the devil when he gets into a temper."

"The man at least is sticking up now for law and order. Yes! I think I'll let you go. Did he say 'to-night'?"

"Yes! And he's to procure all the books, pens, pencils, ink, paper, and stationery. And he says that we were to tell you that he won't say a word about religion. Isn't that square and honest?"

"It is. Although, my dear boys, I fear you both have not much religion to be tampered with."

"No matter, Pap. At least, we stand for a free Bible, Queen and Constitution. Hip! Hip! Hurrah!"

"Well, go ahead," said his father. "I'm of opinion that teacher and pupils will soon tire of the experiment. But I suppose no harm can come of it."

CHAPTER VI

THE LIST OF IMPROVEMENTS

"Now, let me see!" said Dr. William Gray. "H'm! what's this? The Bishop's letter! Why it was the list of improvements I wanted."

"They're on the other side, sir!" said Henry trembling. "I had to use the Bishop's letter."

"And I'm sure his Lordship would be much complimented if he knew that his note-paper with all its mitres and cardinal's hats were used for such a purpose. But no matter."

He took a good, large pinch of snuff here as if to put the profanity out of court, and continued:

"'Dining-room. — To be newly papered in maroon.' What's 'maroon'?"

Henry Liston looked up at the ceiling, and around at the bookcases, and finally brought back his wandering gaze to the face of his pastor, which was steadily and sternly turned toward the window.

"I'm sure I don't know," said Henry at length. "I suppose 'tis some kind of colour."

"Then, if you didn't know what it was, why did you put it there? Look out in that dictionary to see if there is such a word."

With something not quite like a blessing for the ingenuity of his predecessor, Henry looked out for "maroon," and read:

"'Maroon' — [French, *marron*, runaway, from Spanish *cimarron*, wild, unruly, from *cima* (Fr. *cime*) the top of a hill.] A name for fugitive slaves, or their descendants in the West India Islands, and Guiana. — Pret. and pp. marooned, to put ashore, and abandon on a deserted island, as was done with buccaneers."

"H'm. Very good," said the pastor, grimly smiling, whilst Henry looked the picture of confusion. "I see, you consider yourself *marooned* here — cast ashore on a desolate and lonely place, away from the civilization which you are so well qualified to adorn. H'm. The Bishop must soon *construct* parishes to please our ambitious young men. Athboy and Lackagh are no fit places for up-to-date curates —"

"Here it is! Here it is!" said Henry, with a shout of relief. 'Maroon—A brownish-crimson, or claret colour; a rocket used in displays of fireworks.' I knew it was a colour."

"And a rocket," said his pastor, sententiously. "Something that goes up with a fizz and a sparkle, and comes down a stick. H'm! we'll strike out that item, I think!"

And he drew a broad blue pencil across the words.

"'Wood-work, window-shutters, doors, to be painted in faint pink; panels in rose-colour.' H'm! that may go too!"

And he drew his pencil across the page.

"Now let me see!" he continued, taking another pinch of snuff to fortify himself. "'Drawing-room' — of course, opening upon a boudoir, settees, fauteuils, pictures of actresses and winning horses, etc. *Pious* pictures now relegated to servants' apartments. Well, let us see! 'To be papered white, with chrysanthemum-leaves in gray. All the wood-work to be painted white; panels in pale blue or green.'"

That 'chrysanthemum-leaf' appeared to knock the old man almost speechless, for he began to murmur as if his senses were just leaving him: "'Chrysanthemum-leaf, chrysanthemum-leaf!' My God! And has it come to this?"

He ran rapidly down the remaining items, merely catching the leading words, — "French-gray," "panels," "architraves," "in lavender," "sea-green," etc.

Then he laid down the paper, and, turning round, he looked long and earnestly at his curate, who, with eyes

cast down, was longing for the ground to open and swallow him.

"You have not made any mention here," he said at length, his lips curving in scorn, "of a piano. Surely in this advanced age you cannot get on without a piano, and a revolving stool, and a music wagon?"

"I have one!" said the curate faintly. "I want one. I can't do without it. In the long, lonely winter nights, when there isn't a human being within miles that you could speak to, you must have some resource, or go mad."

"Haven't you your theology, and your rubrics, and your Canon Law to study? Are not these resources — the only legitimate resources for a priest?"

There was no answer; and he turned to the paper again.

"Back bedrooms, staircases, etc., etc., *to be left to the option of the pastor!*"

"To be left to the option of the pastor! Yes! To be left to the option of the pastor! Excellent. Unique. Original in its insolence and contempt."

The paper was now a blurred sheet of white and blue lines, item after item having been struck out remorselessly by the blue pencil with which the old man not only erased the writing, but positively tore the paper. Then, after a long pause he said:

"I'll let you know later on what my intentions are about the matter."

This seemed a dimissorial note, and the curate rose to go. But the pastor detained him, and bade him be seated. Then, he said in a gentle tone that startled Henry a great deal more than his angry sarcasm:

"Henry, I knew your father and mother well. They were decent, pious Catholics, God-fearing, honourable in their dealings, simple in their lives, charitable in every action. They would turn in their graves if they thought that their son, a priest of God, would indulge in such vagaries as this. The oil that consecrated you a minister of Christ is hardly dry on your hands; it is only a little while since you said, (I hope with all the sincerity of a

pious Levite): *Dominus pars haereditatis meae et calicis mei —* ”

“Why, I have been seven years on the English mission, and twelve months chaplain at home,” said Henry, who did not know whether he ought to be angry or cry. He was deeply hurt by that allusion to his parents; and he was beginning to feel that he had embarked upon wrong courses.

“Ah, yes! that English mission!” said his pastor, with a sigh. “Many and many a time,” he continued, with his fingers stretched out like a fan, “I said to the Bishop, ‘Keep your priests at home, or let them go for ever. Keep them at home, and let them learn their duty, and study their theology under the venerable priests of the diocese.’ But he would not listen to me. And here now,” he continued abstractedly, as if his curate were not concerned, “we have a lot of little creatures coming back to us, with their nice accents, their lace surplices, the gold watch of course, and — a piano; but with no more knowledge in their heads of theology than so many Freshmen in Maynooth. And,” he snorted, “that’s not the worst. But they have come to despise theology, and to rank it beneath some little rubrics and ceremonies, and taking off their hats to ladies, and keeping their kid gloves well buttoned. And these are the soldiers that are to fight the battles that are looming up before the Church of the future. Look how things are going on here; and they are only symptomatic of the deeper disease. What will these people care about your ‘rose-colour’ and ‘pink-blues’ and ‘maroons’ and ‘chrysanthemum’ and your kid-gloving and piano-tinkling? They fear *me*, but they will despise *you*.”

“I don’t know,” said his curate, “there is some fallacy somewhere; but I can’t put my finger upon it.”

“Yes, there is,” said his pastor. “The fallacy of forgetting that we profess to be disciples of Him who had not whereon to lay His head.”

“Well, but if you carry out that idea,” said Henry,

plucking up courage, "to be consistent you should give up your books and your library, and — and —" he looked around for something else to catch at, "and all your own domestic comfort, and go out, and live in a limekiln."

There is a strong suspicion that Henry had some latent sting in that last expression, but he looked very innocent and humble. The pastor did not notice anything. He was engrossed by one idea.

"By no means," he said. "There is a clear line of demarcation drawn between the necessities of life and its superfluities. Books are necessities to a priest — at least, that was the old idea that has come down to us from generations. Probably 'maroon wall-paper,' and 'chrysanthemum-leaves,' and 'pale-pinks,' and 'French-grays,' and 'Champagne Charlie' waltzes will now take their place. But, believe me, the old ideas were not far wrong. I remember well —"

But here the old housekeeper knocked, and coming in, announced the presence of two young gentlemen who wanted to see the parish priest.

"Two young gentlemen?" he said, not at all pleased at being disturbed, just as he was launching forth on the seas of pleasant or vain reminiscences. "Who can they be?"

"They are the two young gentlemen from the 'Great House,'" said his housekeeper. "They say you were speaking with them to-day."

"Oh, to be sure," said the old man, recalling his invitation. "Send them in! These are the two young Wycherlys."

He seemed to be half-ashamed before his curate for such condescension to heretics; but he welcomed the lads cheerfully, brought them over near the fire, and said:

"Your father, then, had no objection to your coming?"

"Oh, not the least, sir!" said Jack, the elder. "He is awfully pleased. He says he has forgotten all about his classics. The sea air and knocking about the world has driven everything out of his head."

"Not everything!" said the old man. "If I am to judge by his kindness to the poor, he seems to have kept a good deal of knowledge of his science, besides a large amount of benevolence."

He paused a moment, as if not knowing where to begin, before he said:

"Well, now, to carry out our programme! Where shall we begin? Of course, you understand the object of learning the ancient classics?"

"Of course, sir," said Jack. "To pass the matric."

"Well," said Dr. Gray, "that is the utilitarian view of the matter. But there is a higher object. Can you guess?"

"To be able to write a prescription like Pap," said the matter-of-fact Dion.

"That again is utilitarian," said the pastor. "What would you think of getting a golden key to unlock the treasures of antiquity?"

"I say it would be right jolly," said Dion, "that is, if the treasures are worth having."

"Well said," replied the old man. "Did you ever read the *Arabian Nights*?"

"I read *Sinbad the Sailor*," said Jack. "I got it somewhere after our Ned, who went away to sea."

"An' I read *Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp*," said Dion. "Ah, that's right jolly. But it's nothing to Cooper's *Pilot*, or any of Captain Marryat's. Did you ever read *Snarleyvow*? That's a ripping story. Give me a tight brig, wind right astern, a good sea, and a jolly crew — and I'll sail the world ten times over. And if we can come across a slaver, or a pirate, with the black flag and cross-bones aloft, I'd send a seven-pound shot across her bows, and make her bear up to have her papers examined. Then, if they were wrong, I'd put captain and crew in irons."

"H'm!" said the old man, admiring this juvenile rhapsody (whilst Henry Liston smiled at the absurdity of the thing), "we must get you on to Virgil at once so

that you may read of his voyages, and then to the Odyssey for Ulysses. But the reason I mentioned the *Arabian Nights* was this. There is some story where he speaks of countless treasures kept in a cave, the doors of which will only spring back at mention of one magic word: *Sesame!* Now, I want you both to command the treasures of Greek and Roman literature by learning the Greek and Latin grammar, and the magic words that will open up for you the caves of the mighty ancients."

"You see," he went on, taking a huge pinch of snuff, and addressing in imagination a much larger audience than that which was listening to him, "all modern notions of education are wrong, because they are purely utilitarian. You know what the word 'utilitarian' means, I suppose?"

Jack shook his head and looked at the table. Dion shook his head, and looked in a rather comical manner at Father Liston.

"No! Well, 'utilitarian' means, what is devoted, primarily and principally, to some — well, to some personal or lower advantage, what is generally called advancement in life. That is, a young medical student wants to read classics because he has to compound medicines; a lawyer, because there are so many words in legal books, all derived from the classics; a priest, because he has to read Latin during his whole life. Now, that's not the highest motive; and I hate to see the classics turned into a kind of bread-winning machine by those who don't care for their beauties and sublimities. Now, I'd like you, young gentlemen, to conceive such a love for the classics that you'd think it a penance and a punishment to be compelled to read Cooper or Marryat or any of those silly and absurd writers, whose books are so many potboilers, thrown out to make money by silly boys and girls. Do you quite follow me?"

Jack turned his pale face away. Dion, more courageous, said:

"I'm afraid, sir, you have never read a real, rousing novel. Of course, they're beyond you — that is, you're

beyond them. But I'd rather read Marryat than eat butter-scotch, and butter-scotch is ripping, too!"

"You'll grow out of that," said the old man, smiling. "But, to come back, there was the advantage of the old hedge-schools over your modern academies, with all their noise and boasting. Under a roof of sods, and seated on a bench of sods, the old hedge-schoolmaster, who loved his work, used to read out long passages from Virgil and Homer; and when he had hypnotized the boys, he then translated for them; and he made them *mad*, downright *mad* to be able themselves to translate. Hence, a generation of scholars, — peasants and even labourers talking Latin in the fields; and every gentleman capable of quoting Horace at will. Now, if you were to ask a student or collegian to write a line in Latin, he would have to hunt up twenty dictionaries for the words. But, I am delaying you. Father Liston, would you get down that Latin grammar — Valpy's, and show the young gentlemen the First Declension."

Thus commenced their first lesson. They told their father when they went home that Dr. William Gray was a "jolly old chap," and that he had a lot of queer books bound in shoe-leather, in which all the *s*'s were *f*'s, and the word "and" was expressed by a figure for all the world like a twisted constrictor. He was pleased; and hoped they were polite. They assured him they were almost young Chesterfields.

CHAPTER VII

RAPTURES AND REMORSE

THERE are few spirits, if we except those who live under the dead weight of habitual depression, who do not experience at least a few times during life a kind of spiritual rapture or ecstasy that lifts them altogether out of the common ruts of existence, and places them on the summit of the everlasting hills. A certain poet has placed such raptures in the pathless woods, on the lonely shore, and even in the solitude where no voice of man breaks in to drown with its raucous whisperings the musical silence of Nature. The sick man who, leaving the heavily-laden atmosphere of his chamber, stretches forth his arms to the blue heavens, and drinks in long, deep draughts of sweet, cold air, knows what rapture means. The artist soul, that stands for the first time before a noble picture, is cognizant of it. The musician, who improvises on his organ in the midst of imagined angel-presences, knows the exaltation. The poet, who has been suddenly smitten by a great thought, or to whose lips a great line has arisen, walks upon air for evermore, upheld by the serene exaltation which the consciousness of having created some undying beauty produces.

And yet, it is just possible that all these sudden, if serene, pleasures are nothing compared with the gentle happiness of a lonely student, who, cut away from the world, and in the sublime aloofness of intellectual exercises, bends over some mighty folio at midnight, and follows by the light of his lamp the magnificent processes of thought by which great theologians or philosophers cut their laborious and toilsome way through labyrinths of

such vastness and intricacy that a faint mind refuses to follow, and perhaps leaves them in their search with a certain contempt for their persistency. It would be difficult to convince the outer world of Philistines of this. There appears to be a mutual and irreconcilable antagonism between theology and literature. Once and again a George Eliot may study Petavius as an intellectual exercise, as a certain Irish Lord Chancellor used to carry Tertullian with him on his holidays. And with something like consternation the world heard of a Coventry Patmore taking up his gorgeous vellum-bound *Summa* in his old age to find there new and vaster material for an *Unknown Eros*. But there has been amidst the myriads but one vast intellect which wedded poetry to Philosophy and Theology, and entrained Aquinas and Aristotle in the service of the Muses; and that was the poet who stands alone and pre-eminent — Dante. But the man of letters looks up to the lonely watch-tower where the theologian is bending over his oak-bound, brass-clasped folio, and mutters: "A horned owlet, blinking his bleared eyes and flapping his cut wings by moonlight in a dismantled ruin"; and the theologian, looking down from his lofty eyrie on the "man of letters," mutters: "A popinjay with borrowed feathers, chirping some ribald chorus in the market-place." No one appears to understand that there is poetry — the very highest and most supernal poetic inspiration in these musty mediæval folios; and no one appears to understand that underlying the music and magic of modern poetry there may be hidden some deep theological truths or untruths, which perhaps it would be not altogether unwise to learn or unlearn. But, whilst the contempt of moderns for what they are pleased to designate mediævalism is a conceit bred from a sad and incurable ignorance, it must be admitted that theologians and high philosophers are not altogether wise in making their own sciences occult and unintelligible. The Catholic theologian is the richest merchant, but the poorest shopkeeper, in the world. He

has countless riches, but he does not know how to use or display them. He has all kinds of antique and Oriental treasures, bales of costly goods, diamonds of Golconda, topazes of Persia, spoils and seizures from Greece, the flotsam and jetsam from all the wrecked argosies of ancient and modern times; but he does not know how to dress his shop window. He keeps his treasures like some vastly wealthy and usurious Jew in some secret bazaar in a white-walled and isolated city of the East. It takes a long time to travel thither; and men nowadays will not make pilgrimages after wisdom. And then when you get there, you must have a magic password before you see the caves opened where are hidden the treasures that surpass the dreams of all the half-inspired writers of the world. Some day, one of those genii, better taught by the gods, will reveal, and place beneath the hands of men those spoils and treasures of the ages, as a Layard has laid bare the colossal sculptures of Nineveh, or a Huysmans in our own day has taught the world the meaning of the cryptic symbolism that underlies every plinth and capital, statue and gargoyle, stained-glass glories or twilight nooks, in Chartres Cathedral. For the present, however, these vast relics of mediævalism are the exclusive right of lonely thinkers, who hold possession, because alone capable of their usufruct; and these lonely students, keeping watch and ward over the strong-rooms and safes of Divine Thought, are few and far between.

One at least we know — the pastor of Doonvarragh. He had got the key of these treasures in the college where he studied; and he did not allow it to rust. For forty years, almost without intermission, he had given his evening hours to the study of theology and philosophy. There in that lonely room, which served as library and dining-room, he sat at his desk, night after night, some ponderous folio before him, his lamp or candles by his side; and there he plunged with all the raptures of a strong thinker into those reveries which haunted the brains of Spanish or Italian thinkers before the Crusaders

set foot in Palestine, or the Moors had brought into Spain the works and the spirit of the most subtle mind that even Greece could produce. And, with the consciousness that he had done his duty to the sick and poor during the day, he had never a scruple of giving his nights to such intellectual revelry; and when his deep hall-clock tolled out the midnight hour, he could arise from his seat with an *O Altitudo!* on his lips, and seek fearlessly that slumber which he knew so well might be the prelude, as it was the presentment, of that deeper sleep, called Death.

But just as a patient who can lie only in one position may develop pneumonia, so this habit had produced in the mind of this man two dangerous maladies that were now well-nigh incurable. The one was a certain unwavering contempt for feeble thinkers or intellectual commoners. The other was a peculiar sensitiveness, through which every accident that interrupted the splendid and silent harmony of these nocturnal studies jarred upon his nerves, and broke up the serenity that could alone render them pleasant and fruitful. Undoubtedly, much contact with the great minds of the world does beget some disdain for ordinary mortals; and it is slightly aggravating to be told by those who have acquired such habits and reputations that all things else are the toys of children, or the weapons of demons. But if an ordinary mortal ventures on the sacred precincts, and with all humility and bowed head tries to worship at the same shrines, he is instantly regarded as an intruder and a trespasser, and told to carry his incense and orisons to other temples. This, however, is but a human failing, the autocracy and conservatism that are generated by caste or genius.

The other consequence touches our story in a more intimate manner. Dr. William Gray, after forty years of solitary study, had become keenly intolerant of human intercourse. His nerves had become trained to such exquisite delicacy by silence and the solemn quiet of midnight hours, that he had become morbidly sensitive to anything that could break in upon his habits, or disturb

that happy monotone of existence that had now become part and parcel of his life. But these things are not absolutely in one's own power, for we cannot control our circumstances; and sometimes the music of life jarred with sudden and discordant notes. For example, he found that just now in his sixty-third year his eyes were getting somewhat dim. Little clouds would come before them — tiny wisps of darkness, which he could not rub away. Again and again he had changed his spectacles to suit advancing years; but it seemed of no avail. For a time the dear old characters would come out clear and beautiful as ever, and then they would become cloudy and misty, and little aches and pains would shoot athwart his forehead and through his eyes; and he would rise up sad and disheartened to think, but not to read.

Then again, idle people, who seemed to have no particular business in life, would intrude upon his solitude; and with all his brusqueness and asperity, he could not shut the doors of his hospitality against them. But, as one of these visitors irreverently expressed it, "he was like a hen on a hot griddle," till he got rid of the unwelcome intruder. The tyranny of habit had made their presence intolerable. And the luxury of being alone, after such experiences, was all the more sweet.

This particular winter of which we write, he had been engrossed in a formidable and well-beloved treatise, the *De Legibus*¹ of Suarez. It was a gigantic folio, grimly bound in brown leather, and to an ordinary mind those seven hundred and fifty pages, each with its double column of close print, twelve or fourteen inches long, would be a solemn deterrent. Not so with Dr. William Gray. He revelled in these dry and forbidding abstractions, — Origin of Laws, natural, civil, and canonical; their force, their stringency, their solemnity; the abrogation, suspension or dispensation in laws; the rights of privilege and how far they extend; custom and the laws of nations, etc., etc.; and he enjoyed the subject because

¹ On Laws.

his own mind had a strange affinity with it. He knew nothing but Law; Law was to him the voice and outermost expression of the mind of the Eternal. He saw Law everywhere — in nature, in the human mind, in religion, in the comity of nations. He admitted no such thing as an infraction of a law, or a dispensation. Or, if such things were to be, they would by an infallible and inexorable sequence bring their punishment. He believed that the very slightest disobedience to the simplest decree of God or man had its condign retribution; he met every appeal for pity, every justification for a broken commandment, by the one categorical and inflexible sentence: *It is the Law!*

He had ploughed half-way through this mighty labyrinth of human thought, when he plunged into the horrible indiscretion of inviting those boys to study Latin at his house. It was an impulse, a hasty, foolish act, done on the spur of the moment, and alas! with the not very exalted motive of angering his recalcitrant parishioners. Like all close thinkers he lacked imagination, which is the second factor in a sound judgment; and he did not realize what a hideous burden he had assumed until the two young Wycherlys broke in upon his conference with his curate. Then he began to realize what a torture it would be, if, night after night for months, he should have to close that beloved folio, and come down to the level of their intellects in grinding out *mensa*, *mensae*, and all the other pettinesses of the Latin Grammar. Once was bad enough. The boys were not stupid, but they found themselves in unexpected and unusual surroundings. The first lesson was not a success. Oh! if it would only end there. But now he had given his word; and he was too honourable a man to withdraw from an engagement he had voluntarily made. What was he to do? The thing could not be continued. That would be absolutely intolerable. He could not shift it over on his curate's shoulders. It would not be fair. And his curate might reasonably object. There was no loophole of escape from six months of tread-

mill work, night after night, at that abominable grammar; and with two lads, alien in every way, in religion, in habits, in prejudices and thoughts. He actually groaned aloud in sheer despair for what he had done.

But this was not all. The report of what he had done had spread from end to end of the parish, and was canvassed with suppressed, but intense, disapproval. It was unprecedented and, therefore, intolerable. When had he done anything for poor Catholic lads? What Catholic boy had he got into a situation that would help him and his family on in the world? He was always denouncing Protestantism; and now he opens his house to two Protestant lads to train them in those classical studies that were far beyond the reach of Catholic boys. Where was his consistency? Where his principle?

Such, but in many modified forms, were the questions now agitating his people, and discussed sometimes gently, sometimes angrily, sometimes with little reverential apologies and excuses, sometimes with bitterness and acerbity, in forge and workshop, in cabin and cottage, from end to end of the parish. The old people, as a rule, with all their tender reverence for the sacred character of the priesthood, and for their pastor in particular, for they regarded him always with a certain admiration blent with fear, defended his action, and attributed it to a lawful desire to acknowledge in that practical manner Dr. Wycherly's benevolence toward the poorer members of his flock. But the young, with all the fire and folly of youth, denounced the action of their parish priest with fury. They felt instinctively, and they were right, that it was an act of defiance and contempt toward his flock.

In no spot, however, in the three parishes was the matter so hotly discussed as in the cottage of the Duggans. They had been prime movers in the insubordination which emptied the schools. They had some old scores against their pastor; and with such people revenge often becomes a kind of religion. "*You may forgive,*" said one of that class, "*but people of our position never forgive.*" They

feel a kind of pride and glory in their vindictiveness. It is a remnant, like a cromlech or dolman, of that ancient Paganism that was so ruthless and uncompromising.

The family were gathered around the fireside one of these dark, gloomy, murky days that herald and accompany Christmastide in Ireland. The father was not an old man in appearance. He was well preserved, and seemed not more than fifty. There were three *boys*, ranging from twenty to thirty years of age. The vanithee was of the usual gentle but firm, patient, peaceful yet determined kind to be met with in every cabin in Ireland.

This evening, when the subject was again introduced, there was unusual bitterness in their comments. For that day, Dick Duggan, the eldest boy, a dark, silent, brooding character, had been ignominiously expelled from one of the fields now occupied by Kerins, the returned American. His cattle had strayed in through a broken fence and he had followed, when Kerins came on the scene. Kerins, who always boasted that he was a lineal descendant from the sea-rovers and freebooters who had given their name to the old castle down by the sea, was a strong, silent, determined character, who had seen life out on the American prairies, and had looked more than once into the eye of a rifle or a revolver. He had made money; and yearned for a home near the ancestral castle. He had faced cowboys and Indians, and was not going to be frightened by a few cowards at home. He had furnished the cottage, laid in new machinery, borrowed a few men from the Defence Association; and last, not least, cleaned and oiled the "shooting irons" which had served him in good stead more than once in the Rockies and Sierras of the West.

When the cattle had strayed in through the open gap, Dick had followed lazily. He acted as if he had a kind of right over the place; and he was not too expeditious in stopping the trespass. He was rudely awakened by a stern voice hissing in his ear:

"Whose cattle are these? These yours?"

"Yes!" said Duggan. "They're mine. What have you to say to them?"

"Only this," said the other. "I'll give you three minutes to put them out, and to follow them yourself. If you or them are on my grounds after three minutes, I'll blow you right into Hell!"

And suiting the action to the word, he drew out his six-shooter, and held it ready.

Dick obeyed in a sulky manner. Just as he had driven the last cow through the gap, Kerins said:

"You'd better close that gap. I'll not be quite so polite in future."

Dick Duggan's temper was therefore not quite normal when the discussion about his pastor arose around the turf-fire that night.

"There," said the old woman, "ye're bringing that up agen. What is it to ye what your priest does? Isn't he his own masther to do what he likes wid his own?"

"He is," sneered one of the boys. "But if he wishes to open a night-school for Prodestans, let them pay him his jues."

"Does the ould Doctor get his jues from ye, whin ye takes him up yere cows and horses to cure 'em; or does he charge the poor women who bring their babies on their breasts to relieve 'em and cure 'em?" said his mother.

"I'm not denying," said her husband, "that the ould Doctor is a good man to the poor. But what has that to do with the priesht taking up his sons and thraining 'em?"

"Wan good turn desarves another," said the old woman. "Ye can't be always gettin' an' never givin'. An' as ye haven't much to give yereselves, ye ought be obliged to yere priest to pay for ye!"

"Twasn't for us he done it, believe you me!" said Dick Duggan. "It was to aggrawate and annoy the people as if their hearts were not black enough agen him before!"

"Shpake for yereself, you cawbogue," replied the old

woman angrily. "There's hunderds and thousans in the parish that 'ud die for their prieshts, thank God, still!"

"There's wan that'll die for him or for thim he's befrindin', high up too," said Dick savagely, as he went out of the door, "av he don't mend his ways."

"Look there now," said the good old woman, "there's the larning and egication he got; and there's what 'tis comin' to. The ignorant cawbogue, as if he dared lift his hand agen the Lord's anointed; he'd cling him to the ground."

There was the silence of terror in the cabin after this explosion. After a long pause, the old woman turned around from the fire and asked:

"What did he mane by saying 'thim he's befriendin'?"

"I suppose he manes the teacher," said one of the boys, "or perhaps Kerins. They had a couple of words to-day."

"Some day," said the old woman, prophetically, "the words will lade to blows; and the blows will ind badly for some. Faith, the wurruld is turning upside down, whin people can shpake that way about the ministers and messengers of God."

She busied around for some time, and then exclaimed, as the last faint peal of anger died away:

"Thim haythens below at the ould castle couldn't be worse."

It is quite probable that all this angry criticism and correspondingly zealous defence would never have come to the ears of the pastor, had he not his ancient mentoress and Sybil in old Betty Lane. She alone could dare tell him plain truths, which no one else could even hint at. And it was not very long until the opportunity offered. He was fond of visiting the old woman, partly for the relief and amusement her conversation afforded, partly for the edification which even his priestly spirit derived from her active and vivid faith. There was something actually refreshing to the soul of this severe and proud

man in the childlike and simple and courageous manner in which this old saint addressed him.

"Well, Betty," he said, when the granddaughter had announced his presence, "and how are you getting on?"

Not a word of reply came from the lips of the old woman, as she stared silently before her.

"How are you this cold weather?" he shouted, fearing she had not heard him.

She was still silent, he watching her in surprise.

"Yerra, what's this I hear about you?" she said at length, in an angry tone of remonstrance.

"What have you heard, Betty?" he asked, somewhat nettled.

"That you're taking into your house these Prodestans and taching them to be Prodestan ministers. Yerra, sure, the ind of the world must be near, an' Anti-Christ himsel' must be among us to make you do sich a thing as that."

"What harm is it, Betty?" he said, half-angry, half-amused at the interpretation put upon his action.

"What harrum?" she shouted. "Yerra, did I ever think I'd live to see the day whin a priesht would ask what harrum was there in making prachers and supers in the middle of his parish?"

"Who told you I was making preachers and supers?" he said, more indignant at the accusation than he pretended.

"Yerra, sure the whole parish have it," she said. "Be this and be that, I'd never have you in agin to say Mass for me, av I thought it was throe."

"Very good," he said, taking up his hat, "I won't trouble you again. Good-bye! Nance, send for the curate, if your grandmother requires him. Don't send for me again!"

He was leaving the room in an angry mood, when he turned round to take a last look at the old woman.

From the poor sightless eyes, hot, scalding tears were running down the channels of her cheeks, unchecked and

in silence. He thought it was grief for his recalcitrancy, and his pride was hurt that every ignorant creature in his parish should presume to judge him. He knew what strange fancies they sometimes entertained; how utterly wrong were their judgments sometimes. And yet, he also felt that perhaps after all in the eyes of All-Seeing Wisdom, the Catholic instinct of these poor people, intensified by prayer and the reception of the sacraments, and fortified by the glorious traditions of their race, might often penetrate more deeply into the truth of things than his own superior wisdom, where charity and justice were not always the guides.

He had turned away again, and gone down the road, fully determined to break away from such positive and ignorant questioners, when the granddaughter timidly called him back. She had been summoned peremptorily to the bedside of her grandmother, who was heartbroken at the idea of being abandoned by her beloved priest.

"Tell him come back," she said, "and I'll go down on my binded knees to ax the Lord's and his pardon for having shpoken so to God's messenger. Quick, Nance, or I may die before he comes!"

He came back slowly and reluctantly, and entered the chamber. The old woman had risen up in bed, and was watching through her sightless eyes for the faintest indications of his presence. When she knew he was near her, she broke out into passionate cries of sorrow and shame. He listened with bent head, and said nothing.

"You won't shpake to me," she said. "You won't forgive me?"

"Yes!" he said coldly. "I forgive you!"

"That's not what you'd say if you meant it!" she cried in anguish.

"Well, what am I to say, then?" he cried with some impatience.

"Nothin', nothin'," she said resignedly, and lay back on the pillow.

He left the room without a word.

CHAPTER VIII

A CHRISTMAS GIFT

It was Christmas Eve. As is so usual in Ireland, it was a dark, gloomy, rainy, tempestuous day; so dark that the priest had to approach the high window of his dining-room to read the office, for his sight was failing with age, and it was dusk or twilight in the room. The old housekeeper had put little sprigs of holly in the candlesticks on the mantelpiece, and in other little ways she had tried to mark the solemnity of the season. The gray, thoughtful, abstracted man recked not of such things at any time. He was above symbols. He saw only ideas. He only knew his own thoughts; and well he should have known them, for they haunted all his waking moments with a dread persistency of anxiety, or remorse, or apprehension. The approach of Christmas meant no happiness for him.

And just now he knew that to-morrow, the Feast of Love and Forgiveness and Christian Joy, many of his parishioners would come to Mass with bitter feelings against him in their hearts; and he guessed that they would show it by refusing to pay the Christmas offerings that are customary all over Ireland. This is the one act of high treason which marks the bitterest hostility between priest and people in Ireland. It is an act of apostasy, a flinging-down of the gauntlet, the ultimatum, and declaration of hostilities.

He spent his midday in the church, hearing confessions, for, although his people feared him, they had perfect faith in him as a holy and prudent spiritual guide. He returned home just as the day was closing in; and at four o'clock the lamps were lighted and the curtains drawn for the night.

It was a fast-day, and he dined meagrely enough on a couple of fried eggs and a cup of coffee. The cloth was scarcely removed, when the single knock at the hall-door announced the advent of a beggar, or one of the many poor, generous, loving souls, who, on Christmas Eve in Ireland, show their love for the priest by little donations of turkeys, geese, etc. He well knew the pathos of it, the sacrifice they made out of their little gains and property, and the shy, sweet delicacy which always commanded the housekeeper:

"Say from a frind. Don't tell him my name."

But this knock came from Nance, old Betty Lane's granddaughter. She entered the room shyly, and looked at the priest with frightened reverence.

"I kem to ask your Reverence to say wan of your three Masses in the morning for me grandmother."

"Certainly," he said. "Let me see! I'll go over first in the morning and say my first Mass at the house — no! That would be awkward. I'll finish my two Masses in the church, and then drive over. It won't be too late?"

"Oh, no! yer Reverence. We'll be ready for you, an' — you'll take your Christmas breakfast at the house."

"Oh, no, no!" he cried. "This is altogether too much. By the way, how is Betty? I suppose she'll be saying that it is her last Christmas!"

"She is dead, yer Reverence!" replied the girl, turning aside and brushing away a tear.

"Dead?" he cried, horror-stricken.

"Yes, yer Reverence," she said. "Whin I wint in this morning to give her a drink, she was dead and cold. She must have died in the early part of the night."

"This is a great shock!" he said, striving to control his emotion. He remembered, alas! that he had parted from the faithful soul in anger, and unreconciled. Her old wrinkled face, with the furrows filled with tears, came up before him to torment him.

"Since the day yer Reverence was over," continued Nance, not knowing what a bitter thing she was saying,

"she hasn't been the same. Not a word could I get out of her but 'Yes!' or 'No!' and I used hear her sobbing at night in her sleep."

"But was she ailing particularly?" he asked. "Did she send for Father Liston?"

"Oh, yeh, no!" said Nance. "If she thought she was near her ind, she'd send for nobody but yer Reverence. But, sure, no wan can tell whin the ould people take it in their heads to go. But she was the good mother to me!"

And the girl wept sadly.

"Very good!" at length said the priest. "You can go home now, Nance; and I'll be over in the morning immediately after the Parish Mass. And we can talk over the arrangements for the funeral."

"Very well, yer Reverence. I'll lave it all in your hands. 'Twill be the lonesome Christmas for me!"

"And for me," he thought, as the door closed on the girl.

He sat down and buried his face in his hands. The keenest remorse flooded his soul. His oldest friend in the parish, his only friend, had passed away unreconciled and, as she thought, unforgiven. Her faith, her piety, her vision of God, her freedom of speech which he remembered now with a pang he himself had invited and enjoyed, her very poverty, out of which she gave so largely and generously — all came back, each with its little sting of remorse and bitterness for an opportunity lost, and not to be recalled. Minute after minute seemed to flit by over the head of the lonely man as he sat bowed by sorrow at his hearth-side. He did not hear the repeated knocks at his door — the shy, silent whispering in the hall, as messenger after messenger came in with her little offering. He could only think of that old withered face and the tears that ran in its channels.

At last the knocks had ceased, and tea was placed on the table, when the sound of a car stopped at the door woke him to a new sensation. Although slightly indif-

ferent, and thinking it might be his curate coming for instructions for the morrow, it was yet a diversion from his gloomy thoughts. He waited and listened. There was a sharp, peremptory double knock, which his house-keeper answered. Then the sounds of something very heavy being dragged into the hall, a hasty colloquy and a loud-pitched musical voice, and, as the dining-room door opened, a young girl burst into the room.

She seemed not to be more than fourteen or fifteen years of age, but she had all the self-possession of a woman. And surely such a fair apparition never threw its shadow on that room before. Even with his dimmed eyes, the priest looking down on the pale face, just now washed by the wintry rains, and slightly flushed from the rudeness of the winds, discerned something strangely and weirdly beautiful beneath the hood that framed it; and large, dark eyes looked up at him with a half-solemn, half-merry look, that was to his lonely soul something wonderful and almost alarming.

"Here I am, Uncle, at last," she said, holding out one gloved hand, "ain't you glad to see me?"

He murmured something; but looked so surprised at the apparition that she thought it necessary to explain.

"You know I'm your niece," she said. "My poor mother was your sister, at least so I've been told; and Father Falvey said to me, 'Now you go right on; your uncle is a great man at the other side, and he will be awfully pleased to see you, and have you always with him.' But, do you know, Uncle, I didn't think you were so old. Mother always said that you were so much younger and she used talk about you so, and say how clever you were. My—what a lot of books! Sure, you don't read all these?"

"Well, you'll help me," he said. "But, child," he continued in a tone of real alarm, placing his hand on her head and shoulder, "you are drenched. Go at once to the kitchen and change everything and tell Anne to get you a cup of tea. Or, stay!"

He rang the bell. The old housekeeper appeared, half bewildered, half frightened. She thought she was going to get orders to expel the intruder at once.

"Take Miss O'Farrell to the kitchen fire, Anne, and get her some dry things to put on; and get her a hot drink at once."

"But I may come in, Uncle, then, may I not?"

"Certainly. I'll wait tea here for you. Only don't delay or you'll catch cold."

"Oh, I was near forgetting," she said, turning away, "would you mind, Uncle dear, settling with that driver? You know I think he was charging me a little more than was right."

She had put her hand in her pocket, and stretched forth her meagre purse. The little gesture touched him, and he put her hand aside.

"Now, leave all that to me! You go at once and change your clothes as I told you."

He came back to his fire, after settling her fare with the driver who grumbled badly and quoted the wet night, and the storm, and the eight-mile drive, and Christmas time, and many other things; but finally compromised for a glass of whiskey which the priest compassionately gave him. But, when the latter had reached his fireside, and the car had driven away, and all noises had subsided, and the wheels of thought began to revolve again, he almost laughed at the absurdity of the situation, and the strange pranks Destiny seemed to be playing with him. He was just in the condition of a drowning man who flings up his arms and goes down despairing into the depths, or of one who, clinging to some frail support above a precipice, at last decides that he must give way and succumb to Fate.

"It is quite clear now," he murmured, leaning his head on his hands, "that my peace of mind, if ever I possessed it, is at an end for ever."

And yet, he thought, how would it be in his old age, with eyesight ever growing dimmer and dimmer, and

with a heart-breaking farewell to his books on his lips, — if this sudden vision were to create a new dawn in his life, and supply by gentle human intercourse the awful dearth and hunger in his life which his beloved studies had hitherto filled?

"Perhaps so," he muttered, as his niece re-entered the room, "these things are disposed by the Higher Powers."

She looked more attractive even than when she had entered in her nun-like hood. The sodden wet aspect had disappeared; and she looked now so spruce, so neat, so perfect a little picture that the grim man decided, Yes, it was surely a new dawn that had broken on the dusk of his life! She had put on a soft gray gown, which fitted her form to perfection, her long, dark hair was filleted in front and caught behind with a gleaming comb, which allowed the loose tresses to hang down almost to her waist. Her large, open sleeves, frilled with lace, left her arms bare to the elbow. He did not approve of this; but he said in his own mind, It is an Americanism, I suppose, and her mother must have known it.

She came over quite familiarly and leant down over the fire, and in answer to his query, whether she had had a hot drink, she answered gaily:

"Yes, dear uncle, I had. That's a dear old soul — your help. But, look here, she's Anne, and I'm Anne also. How are you going to distinguish us? It would never do, you, know, for us to be coming when we are not called."

"I'll call you Annie," he said. "Will that please you? It is a kind of diminutive, you know. Or, would you prefer Nan, or Annette?"

"Nan, Nan, Nan," she repeated, holding her hands in a meditative way before the fire. "Annette, Annette! No, we'll keep to Annie, I think."

"What — what," stammered the old priest, "did your mother call you?"

"Well, you see, I was away a good deal from mother

at school; and then, when I did come home, she called me Anna. I didn't like it. It seemed a little tony, or affected. In school, I had a pet name. Girls have a fashion of giving pet names in school to each other."

"And what was your pet name?" he said.

"Gyp, or Gypsy," she replied, "because I was dark, and, I suppose, a little unruly. You know, I have a temper of my own. I don't like being crossed sometimes."

"Oh, indeed!" he said, lapsing into his usual vein of sarcasm, "I'm glad you have mentioned it. We shall be on our guard."

"Ah, there now, that's sarcasm. Well, well, just think of a dear old priest, like you, being sarcastic. One of our priests at the Sacred Heart Church was very fond of talking in that way. You never knew when he was serious. In fact, he used to boast that he never spoke seriously to the Sisters or the children. Well, you know, we used to laugh — people always laugh at such witty things, especially when they are said about others; but somehow, we didn't like him. You know," she said, shuffling uneasily, and spreading out her little hands deprecatingly, "we expect priests to be serious, and gentle, and — and — awful."

"Very good," he cried, rising and going to the tea-table, "after that little lecture to your venerable uncle, suppose we have some tea."

She drew over her chair, and said saucily, as she removed the cosey:

"I think, uncle, 'tis my place to pour out the tea, is it not?"

"I suppose so," he said, resigning himself to the new order of things. "I take it that you are going to take possession of all my goods and chattels."

"There now again," she cried, raising the teapot daintily, "where did you learn to be sarcastic, uncle, living all alone here by yourself? Why, that only belongs to society people."

"Oh, well," he replied, "we don't give society people

a monopoly of such things. When you begin to think, and you must think a good deal when you are alone, you naturally come to take a rather cynical view of things."

"Well, now," she said, "that is right curious. But, uncle?"

"Well?" he said.

"Do you know I have had no dinner to-day. May I not order an egg?"

"'Tis a fast-day, Annie," he said. "And the laws of the Church have never been violated in this house."

The girl looked disappointed. He saw it, and relented.

"Ha, you said, I believe, that you had no dinner?"

"No, absolutely nothing since I left the boat at Queens-town at noon. And say, uncle, I'm not bound to fast, you know, I am scarcely fifteen as yet."

"No," he said, rising and touching the bell, "but you are bound to abstain. Every child over seven years is bound to abstain."

"My! but that is hard," said his niece, nibbling at a piece of toast. "Over with us, we got a dispensation easily in this matter. Don't you give dispensations here?"

"No!" he said, she thought rather sharply. "Law is Law. It is made to be obeyed, not to be dispensed with. Anne," he said, turning to his aged housekeeper, "Miss O'Farrell has had no dinner to-day. This must be her dinner. Can you get some eggs and sardines?"

"I can, sir," said the old housekeeper readily. "But may not the child have a chop after so long a fast?"

"No!" he said, so sharply that Annie was startled. It was a new revelation.

He seemed to be moody for some time. The eggs and sardines on toast presently appeared, and the girl raised the cover.

"They *are* nice," she said, with the enthusiasm of hunger. "Uncle, may I not help you to some?"

"Have I not told you," he said, almost rudely, "that this is a fast-day? How then can you ask me to violate one of the laws of the Church?"

She sank abashed before his eyes, and ate her meal in silence. He had pulled over his chair to the fire, leaving his niece alone at the table. He had simply swallowed one cup of tea, touching no food.

During the progress of the meal he touched the bell again, and when the old housekeeper appeared he asked whether Miss O'Farrell's room had been got ready. The old woman answered, yes.

"Then, be sure to have a good peat and wood fire there," he said. "Miss O'Farrell is used to a heated room."

This softened matters again a little, and the girl crept near him.

"Uncle," she said timidly.

"Well?" he replied, but there was an accent of kindness in his voice.

"Uncle, will you call me 'Annie' always and not 'Miss O'Farrell'?"

"Very well," he replied.

"Uncle?" she said again.

"Well, what now?" he said.

"Do you know," she said, laying her small hand on his shoulder, "I am afraid that — that — you didn't expect me — that I am unwelcome."

"No, no, Annie," he replied, taking the girl's hand from his shoulder, and folding it in his big palm. "You mustn't think that. You must learn to bear with the temper of an old man. You are thrice welcome for your own sake, and — and for your mother's. There; we'll say no more to-night. Be ready to come with me in the morning to eight-o'clock Mass. Anne will call you. Good-night!"

"Good-night!" she said. "And, uncle?"

"Well now?" he asked.

"A Happy Christmas, uncle!"

"Yes, yes, a Happy Christmas!" he said. Then, as if he were again too hasty, he added:

"A Happy Christmas, Annie!"

CHAPTER IX

A QUESTION IN THEOLOGY

To sensitive, nervous dispositions, which are always regretting the past, or filled with forebodings for the future, the first moments of waking in the morning are very trying. Consciousness suddenly aroused seems to rivet and fasten itself on the most unpleasant things; and it is only when the blood begins to circulate freely through the brain, that these unhallowed thoughts are expelled, and the more healthy ideas of normal waking hours promptly take their place.

In the gray dawn of the winter morning the good pastor of whom we are writing suddenly realized two or three portentous events, which in the excitement of the previous night, and the happy oblivion of sleep, he had momentarily forgotten. All the remorse he had felt the previous day on the announcement of the death of old Betty Lane, came back and he felt abashed, humbled, ashamed. All the dread of his first interview with his niece came back; and he was terrified. Evils seemed to be accumulating on him from all sides; and the more he sought to shelter himself against them, the more surely and swiftly did they seek him out.

It was a silent and moody man that drove his niece across the level road that led to his church; and to her young eyes, cleared from the night-shadows, he seemed quite a different being from the stately and stern, but kindly being she had met the night before. He led her around by a private door that marked the entrance to the pews: and probably it was this little preoccupation and his dim sight that prevented him from observing

that not far away from the place where his own collectors were sitting with sheets of paper before them, there was a small group of two or three men, the centre of which was Dick Duggan. Their object in placing themselves there was manifest. They said nothing, did nothing, but watched. And the result was soon seen. Men came into the chapel-yard, made their way toward the collectors to pay their little offerings and have their names taken down, saw this group watching silently, paused, hesitated, and passed by without entering their names. Little knots of people came in, eagerly talking, suddenly grew silent, whispered in a frightened tone, drew back, and passed into the church, like the others. The collectors looked serious: the little group of watchers smiled; Duggan laughed outright.

It was rather fortunate the parish priest had not observed them. With his lofty pride, he disdained going near the collectors to ask or see if the parishioners were paying their usual offerings. This happy accident left him in ignorance of the proceedings of the men who were exercising a silent terrorism over the people. If he had seen them, he would have peremptorily ordered them from the place; and if they resisted, he would have removed them with violence. But, although he suspected that there would be some conspiracy on foot to compel the people to withhold their Christmas offerings, he never dreamed that they would venture on such a bold and insolent plan to thwart and annoy him. It was only after he had said his second Mass, and was hurrying over towards where the remains of old Betty Lane were lying, that he was accosted by the collectors, who showed him a vacant list and an empty purse. He thanked them, and said nothing, but passed on.

He left his niece at his house, and bade her have breakfast without waiting for him, and drove on to where the remains of the old woman awaited their final sepulture. There in the presence of the saintly dead, he saw as in a flash of inspiration, how poor and petty were all

earthly things, when viewed in the light of that eternity to which Death was the happy portal; and not for the first, nor the hundredth, time in his life, did he wish that his weary pilgrimage, too, were at an end, and that he could get away from these hateful and perplexing surroundings into the unbroken serenity of eternity. He breakfasted there in that little parlour with that poor, humble washerwoman; and watching her patient face, seamed with toil and the harsh buffetings of life, he grew calmer, and more confident of God.

"I shall miss poor Betty," he said. "She was almost my only friend in the parish."

"Oh, don't say that, yer reverence," said the poor girl, "you have plinty of frinds; only they're shy of you."

"The collection this morning doesn't show it," he said, almost humbly. "Look here, Nance, not a name on the list."

"Glory be to God!" said the frightened girl, "that never happened before. There must be some divilment behind it."

"I don't mind the loss," he said. "That's nothing. It is the shame and insult of the thing I mind. Every man that passed by this morning slapped me on the face."

"It's only wan or two, yer reverence," she said, reassuringly. "Only wan or two; but they are a bad lot, and the people are afraid of them."

"That's just it," he said. "That's just what I complain of — that the whole parish should be terrorized by one or two miscreants. What are they afraid of? What can these fellows do?"

"That's throe, yer reverence," she said. "But you see the people nowadays don't like throuble; an' anny wan of them blagards could set fire to a rick of hay or straw, or burn down the cow-house, or lame a horse for life — and they'd do it!"

"Very good," said the priest. "But then the people would get compensation from the court. They wouldn't suffer a penny loss."

"Yes, yer reverence. But look at all the throuble. Look at the lawyers, witnesses; and maybe afther they'd gone to all kinds of expinse, it would be thrun out in the ind by the ould barrister."

"I see," he said, reflectively. "You're right, Nance! The days of heroism, and even decent principle, are past. The people are become a parcel of sheep, ready to fly and destroy themselves at the bark of a dog."

"At any rate, yer reverence," she said, "there's wan consolation. They're more afraid of Dick Duggan than they are of yer reverence."

"I'm afraid 'tis true," he said laughing. "They can't say any more that I am keeping them in a state of terror."

"But, you may be sure of wan thing, yer reverence," the poor girl said, anxious to relieve the weary load that was pressing on her pastor, "there isn't wan parishioner, except maybe thim Duggans, that won't pay you yer jues. An' if the poor old 'uman had her way, you'd get it on the double."

"Yes, I know that," he said somewhat more cheerily. "But not one penny of their money shall soil my hands. I wouldn't touch the coins of cowards."

It was true. That very day, at the funeral of old Betty Lane, whilst the men were waiting to take out the coffin for burial some farmers came up sheepishly to the parish priest, and proffered their offerings.

"We weren't able to give it this morning," they said.

"Why?" he asked shortly, whilst his thin lips drew together, and curled in angry scorn.

There was no answer.

"Take your money," he said. "I'd feel myself everlastingly shamed, if I touched the money of men who were afraid to do right."

And they slunk away.

Again, after the funeral was over, little groups met him; and humbly and apologetically offered their little mites. He dismissed every one of them with contempt; and they began to think that after all, they would have

done better had they braved the anger of Dick Duggan and his clique.

He got home in the early afternoon, and ashamed of the gloom of the morning, which he saw had fallen heavy on his niece, he determined at any cost to put a brave face on matters and help Annie and his only other guest, his curate, to have a pleasant evening.

When he entered the hall, and put up his driving cloak and hat, Annie came out to meet him. It was quite clear that the morning's depression had left but little trace on her blithe and happy spirit, for she had her arms bare to the elbows and whitened with flour, whilst thick lumps of dough clung to her fingers.

"You never wished me a 'Merry Christmas' this morning," she said. "And now I can't shake hands with you. I am making up some jam-rolls for Anne. She says she never saw them made."

"Then you'll have to eat them yourself," he said. "Neither I nor my curate is going to put ourselves in for a bad fit of dyspepsia."

"But, uncle! Dyspepsia?" she cried in protest. "No! No! I'll make them so light you won't know when you've swallowed them. I will, indeed."

"All right," he said. "But we don't want any of your American cookery here. Keep your old pies and doughnuts to yourselves. All we want is honest Irish meat and drink."

"Well, I'll bet you, — I'll bet you, something," she cried, "that I'll make your curate eat them. Who is he? And what is he like?"

"Ah, well, now, just wait and see. It is always a mistake to describe people. There is generally disappointment. But get away now and go to work. I have to read my office before dinner, and read up something. I suppose there can be no reading to-night."

"I guess not," she said, "if I can help it. Imagine — reading on Christmas Night!"

Father Henry Liston came over early. His face was

clouded. He had heard of the news at Doonvarragh, although at Lackagh and Athboy, where he had celebrated, the collections came in as usual.

"You see, Pastor," he said, with some freedom, because he felt he was now on the pastor's side, and there was almost a sense of patronage in his accent, "if you had just allowed me pitch into those scoundrels, this would never have happened. These fellows begin to think we are afraid of them; and, by Jove, mark my words, Pastor, if ever our people think that we fear them, they will trample upon us. That's my experience."

Dr. William Gray looked down on the youthful form, and boyish face of his curate, and smiled.

"Now, if I had been over here this morning," continued Henry, not noticing his pastor's amusement, "I'd have taken that Duggan by the nape of the neck, and pitched him into the channel. And, then, I'd have taken each of the other fellows in turn, and chucked them out."

"You wouldn't have taken the three in a bunch?" said the pastor. "That would have spared time and labour."

"No," said his curate, unheeding the sarcasm in his anger, "I would have taken them separately and individually. It would have been more effective; and then, I'd have withered up that congregation in such a way that not one of them would have been left an appetite for roast goose that day."

"That would never do," said his pastor. "That would drive the whole parish to drink; and the remedy would be worse than the disease."

"Well, all I know is," said the curate, "you have taken the whole thing too quietly. You have the name of being a strong man; and I suppose you were when you were young. But age, age tells its own tale. It is only young men should be made Parish Priests and Bishops. They have no experience and no fear."

"Out of the lips of babes and sucklings cometh forth wisdom," said his pastor. "But we'll waive the subject now, young man. I want to ask you a question in theol-

ogy before we dine. I believe we can't discuss the matter after."

The curate's face fell at the word "Theology." It was the prelude, he knew, to many an ordeal. But he plucked up courage to say:

"Why not?"

"No matter. You'll see for yourself after," replied his pastor. "But the question is, If a parcel were sent to you from abroad, a parcel which you strenuously objected to, which you didn't want, and distinctly refused, were yet sent on, what would you do?"

Henry reflected a moment, and recalled all his principles of justice and contracts, which he had learned with infinite pains in college. Then he held up his head and did a wise thing. He asked another question:

"Was the carriage prepaid?"

"Well, yes," said the pastor. "They were obliging and polite enough to do that."

"Because, you know," said his curate, confidently, "I always suspect unstamped letters, or parcels on which you are requested to pay something. Well, then, I should say it all depends on the value of the parcel."

"But, you don't know the value and cannot measure it. It may be worth a good deal, or —"

Here the pastor paused. He could not say that word.

"By Jove, that's a hard case," said Henry, driving his hands deep in his pockets and looking crossly at his boots. "I never heard of such a case in theology. It only shows that in practical life, questions will crop up, of which the astutest theologians never dreamed. You must give me time, Pastor; that's not a question to be decided offhand."

"Certainly," said his pastor. "In fact here comes dinner. You sit here."

"You expect somebody else," said his curate, nodding to the knife and fork and napkin at the other side.

"Yes! This is my niece, Miss O'Farrell, Father Liston," said the pastor, as Annie entered the room. And prob-

ably, the best fun of the Christmas night was to see the astonishment and surprise written on the face of that good curate, as Annie sailed in, and quietly saluted him.

She had put on a white dress, frilled and tucked and plaited in some marvellous manner. Little fringes of lace fluttered around her neck and over her hands; and a little miniature of her mother's clasped at her throat seemed to be the only bit of colour that relieved the white monotone of dress on the one hand, and the dark masses of hair that rippled down from the gold fillet across her neck. She looked to the eyes of the young priest the living embodiment of all those pure, sweet, holy figures that had been painted on his brain, since he took up his first prayer-book, or raised his eyes, at the bidding of his mother, to the celestial vision of the Woman and Child. He stared and stared and stared, as if he were mesmerized with surprise, until he was brought back to his senses by the young lady herself saying:

"Look here, Father Liston, you're spilling your soup on the table cloth; and Anne will be furious."

Then he blushed for his bad manners, and got back to his senses.

But it was a happy dinner; and when the plum-pudding and jam-rolls and mince-pies came round, Henry did them all full justice.

"You'll take some more plum-pudding?" said the pastor.

"For the sake of the sauce," said Henry, handing up his plate.

"No, no, Uncle," said Annie, "Father Liston must take some of these jam-rolls. It was I made them."

There was no resisting that appeal; and Henry took three jam-rolls on his plate.

"They are as light as feathers!" said Annie.

"They are absolutely murderous!" said her uncle.

"I appeal to Father Liston," said Annie.

"Yes! they're very bad," said Henry. "Don't give

any to your uncle, Miss O'Farrell. They'd shorten his life. Keep them all for me."

"There, I guessed so much," said the pastor.

"You might as well eat bullets," said Henry, handing over his plate for more. "They're certainly as indigestible as cheese upon corned beef."

"You'll be deadly sick to-morrow," said the pastor, "and I'll not attend your calls."

"All right," said Henry. "I wouldn't advise you touch one, Pastor. You'd be a dead man in a week."

And then the dish was cleared. Annie held it up triumphantly over her head. "There's American cookery," she cried. "Hurrah for the Stars and Stripes!"

Then she said merrily that the sauce of the pudding had got into her head and that, if she stayed longer, she would talk too much, and would uncle mind, if she went in to Anne; and she would appear again at tea-time. Which was all a pretty way of contriving to leave the two priests alone, for they had many deep things to discuss which a young maiden's comprehension could hardly reach.

When he had closed the door, Henry said, standing near the fire:

"Is that the parcel you spoke of, Pastor, that came prepaid from a foreign land?"

"It is," said the pastor, as just a little shade of anxiety crept down on his face.

"Then I think my decision is, to keep that parcel," said Henry.

CHAPTER X

DUNKERRIN CASTLE

UNDER the same heavy pall of darkness, under the same smoky mist, that seemed now to descend from the heavens and again to exhale from the earth, the same Christmas was spent, but not under the same conditions, at Dunkerrin Castle. The half-gypsy, half-tinker tribe, were all gathered together in a large room of the old castle, — the grandmother of sixty bending now over the fire, now over the cradle, where the youngest child was sleeping; the father seated on a wooden chair smoking; the children romping or fighting for the bones of the fowl that had served as a Christmas dinner. There was an aspect of debility about the old woman, as she bent herself almost double over the fire, contrasting strongly with the erect and almost defiant attitude she assumed when she went amongst the people and carried the terrors of her supposed supernatural powers amongst them. She was an actress off the stage, and she seemed limp and broken under the weight of her years. Her son was a long, lithe, active fellow, who, even in repose, seemed to keep every sense and sinew on the alert against surprise; and even now, as he smoked calmly, his eyes seemed, whilst watching the flames that shot up the chimney, to be afar in their vision, seeing what might be even more truly than what is.

The dusky brood of children varied in appearance as much as in age. The eldest girl was positively ugly; yet her brother, next in age, was as beautiful as those pictures that represent Ribera, the Spanish artist. Then again, the girl next in age was as perfect in face and

figure as any gypsy traditions could show; and so on, down through the entire line of brown young savages to the baby who cried in her cradle.

Except the noisy tumult of the children, quelled from time to time by words or blows from their granddame, there was no sound audible. But a trained ear would catch, at regular pauses, a long, low gurgling sound, the swish of the waves that this night broke softly outside and then rushed tumultuously through the tunnel right under the room where the gypsies were keeping their Christmas. Sometimes, in the high swell and purpose of the tide, the waters thundered and seemed to shake to its foundation the stout old castle, and then to break away in hissing volumes of water that seemed to sweep the foundations with them.

The room where the family were gathered was very large, square, and lofty. The floor was of stone; and the roof ascended dome-like, or like a beehive, layer upon layer of apparently small stones leashed on one another till they closed narrowly in the summit. The narrow slits that opened in and served as windows were carefully blocked up with old clothes driven deep into the wedges of the walls, so that not a ray of light could be seen from the outside, nor could a listener or watcher learn aught of what transpired within. High up on one of the walls was the Gothic door, strongly iron-hinged and studded with nails, through which Dr. Wycherly had made his way and found his wife's supposed tresses. But it looked so massive and so antiquated that a careless person would deem it but a piece of mock masonry or woodwork without any further use or design. Over in one angle of the building was a litter of straw held in place with a framework of heavy stones. Two or three ragged coverlets were cast loosely upon it. A pony's harness and a few boxes made up the rest of the furniture. The larder was a niche near the fireplace; and it was the one opulent thing that relieved the misery of the place, for it was crammed with turkeys, geese, and

chickens, which had been reported missing from many a desolate fowl-yard during the past eventful fortnight.

As the night wore on, and the children's cries died away, as they clambered undressed into their straw couch, the eldest girl and boy alone remaining up with their parents, the old woman said, in a half-querulous manner:

"Get out the brandy, little Pete. Why not we spend Christmas, as well as the Gorgios?"

He rose up lazily, and yet nothing loth; and was about to mount a ladder toward the door that was sunk into the masonry, when he paused, listened, and thought he heard a footstep outside. Just then, a mighty sweep of waters, borne in on the swell of the tide, hushed every sound for a moment; and when there was silence, a tap was distinctly heard at the door. The man hastily removed the ladder, whilst the old woman lowered the lamp, and the two eldest children looked from father to grand-dame, as if asking what they were to do in the sudden emergency. Then the old woman, in answer to a look from her son, nodded; and he, going over, undid the bolt, shot back the lock and the visitor entered.

It was Ned Kerins, proprietor of the farm, which was now such a storm-centre in the parish. He seemed to have taken a little drink; but was in perfect command of himself, and, as he entered, he said with the half-playful, half-apologetic tone of a man who knows he is not welcome:

"You did not expect a visitor such a night as this?"

"A friend is always welcome," was the reply, as Pete closed the door, and then stood irresolute, waiting for Kerins to speak.

"I guessed so. Otherwise I shouldn't have come. But I haven't come empty-handed. See!"

And drawing a bottle of whiskey from his pocket, he handed it to the old woman.

"You see," he added, sitting on the box which Pete had offered him, "it was lonesome up there at Crossfields.

My two protectors are now lying dead drunk, one at each side of the fire in the kitchen; and I guess I should be very soon like them, had I remained. Get a couple of glasses, Pete, and let us drink together. It is ill drinking alone."

Pete got the glasses leisurely. The old woman, whilst rocking the cradle with her left-hand, kept her keen black eyes fixed on their visitor. She divined that it was not pleasure, nor the sense of loneliness, that drove him forth from his home on such a night.

"Thou hast done ill, friend Kerins," she said at length, assuming her oracular way of speaking, "in leaving thy home to-night! When the wild hawk leaves his nest, you will find nought but blood and feathers in the morning."

"Never fear, Judith," he cried, as the liquor gave him courage. "The enemy have won one victory to-day; and they will get drunk over it to-night."

"What victory?" cried the old granddame. "We have not been out to-day; and news does not come but slowly here."

"Better things than news seem to have come," he said, laughing and nodding at the larder.

"Yes," she said, and there were anger and suspicion in her tone. "The people open their hearts largely to the poor at Christmas time."

"Now, don't be angry, Jude," he said, with a laugh. "I'm not suspicious. And in any case, the fox always kills far away from home."

"But you haven't told us what the Duggans have gained," she said, waiving the question. "How have they gained a victory, and over whom?"

"Oh, by Jove," he said, "over the biggest man in the parish. They stopped the priest's jues to-day. Not a man that entered the chapel paid a cent."

The old woman's eyes glistened with pleasure, but she said:

"It is not meet for you to rejoice thereat, friend Kerins;

for is it not on your account that he is at war with his parishioners?"

"And I don't rejoice, friend Judith," he said, adopting her mode of speech. "I only wonder that the great man took his punishment so easily."

"He did?"

"Yes! he passed in without a word, although he saw Dick Duggan and his confederates frightening off the people. He had a young lady with him. He passed in, and said not a word."

There was silence for a few seconds. The old woman raked out some white ashes; and then bade her son go forth and bring in fresh timber for the fire.

"Yes, you are right," she said, "in coming hither. We shall make a night of it, when Pete comes in. Pull thy chair nearer, and drink!"

"So, as I was saying," he continued, accepting the old woman's invitation, and bending over the smouldering ashes, "my men are safe to-night. And, as I was saying, it is lonesome up there alone; and then, I had a fancy — where's Pete?"

"Gone for fresh fuel in the stable. He'll be back presently. But you were saying? —"

"Oh, yes, I was saying, or about to say, that I had a fancy to spend my first Christmas night in Ireland in the place where my forefathers lived. You know this old castle belonged to us?"

"I know it is called Dunkerrin Castle," she replied. "But I never heard that you had any rights in it."

"Oh, I didn't say that," he cried, shuffling on his rude seat. "I have no rights now. But maybe, I might yet. The old doctor is failing. His son, the mate, will never come back to live here —"

"How do you know that, Kerins?" she said. "He has been home from sea before; and you must know his father intends the place for him."

"Oh, I suppose so," said Kerins. "You know more about people than I do. I keep to myself always. In

fact, I am surprised at my coming down here to-night; but I had a fancy — Where's Pete?"

"Gone for fuel," she said angrily. "Didn't I tell you so? Here, Cora, go and see where is your little father gone. This man is impatient. He does not like my company."

"Now, now, Judith," said Kerins soothingly, "don't be cross. I meant nothing. Don't go out, lass; the night is dark."

"Oh, but she must go," said the old beldame. Then, turning to the girl, she said:

"Go!"

"You see," said Kerins, "as I was saying, I had a fancy for the old place — not that I'd care to live here; but you see, old times and old recollections come back. My father often told me that our ancestors were freebooters here. They owned neither king nor country. They regarded only their own kith and kin. They held all this land which the old doctor holds now — by confiscation, of course, and Crossfields, and the Duggans' farm, and all the land down to Athboy. An' they used go out to sea — What's that?"

"Only the tide," said Judith, as a deep roll as of thunder reverberated beneath them, and the seas seemed mounting up to submerge the old castle. "The son of the freebooters and sea-pirates should not shiver on such firm ground as this."

"I'm not afraid," he said, "and I am not the son of a freebooter. I was only saying my ancestors used go out to sea in their great ships by night — at least, so I heard my father say — and, I suppose, they were pirates and smugglers. This old place is just the place for smuggling."

He did not see the fierce look of hate and suspicion the old Sybil cast upon him.

"I heard of the Kerins, too," she said, calmly, disguising her anger and fear. "I have heard it said that many a man felt the point of their dirks for less than what you have said to-night."

"Yes! it was a word and a blow," he replied, not heeding the threat. "They say there was a secret chamber here in the old castle, where they kept their smuggled goods — brandy and tobacco; and they also say, there was a deep hole here somewhere, through which they dropped into the tide the people they murdered. Of course, these are old legends and stories that have no meaning now; but it only shows what rough times these were — it was all fighting and blood, every man's hand against every one else."

The girl, Cora, came in, bearing in her strong arms a little pile of pine logs for the fire. She was humming an air lightly; and, as she approached the fire, and flung on log by log, she broke into the familiar Romany rhyme:

Here the gypsy gemman see,
With his Romany gib, and his rome and dree,
Rome and dree, rum and dry,
Rally round the Romany Rye.

Then she rapidly changed it to the old nursery rhyme:

The farmer loved a cup of good ale,
And called it very good stingo.
There was S with a T, T with an I, I with an N,
N with a G, G with an O,
There was S T I N G O;
And called it very good stingo.

"Where does thy little father tarry?" said Judith.

"In the stable," the girl said. "The pony is sick. He is physicking the pony. Hark! there the pony stamps his little foot. The pony does not like physic."

The "little father" was not physicking the pony, although the pony was stamping his "little foot." The "little father" had long since sped up the narrow path that led to the chine of the hill beneath which Kerins's farm lay. The "little father" had then grown more cautious, for the great brown collie gave tongue when he heard the strange step; but a whistle, a long, low, caress-

ing whistle, subdued him, and the "little father," after peering through the window, carefully entered the house. It was quite true what Kerins had said. The two Defence Union men were lying, heavy in drink, one at each side of the fire that had now smouldered down into dead white ashes. They were bulky fellows, with whom the "little father" would have had no chance had they been sober. But now they were at his mercy. He stooped down, and picked their pockets clean of every bit of money they possessed. Then, looking around, he spied their revolvers, ready to hand, on the kitchen settle. These he appropriated also, having seen that they were loaded. Then, driven to further covetousness by success, he put into his pocket their cartridge-cases. Snap, the great brown collie, seemed to protest by grumbling deeply against the robbery; but he knew the "little father" well, and, like many superior beings, he stifled his conscience through human respect; and the "little father" patted him on the head, and said "good dog!" and he took it as his reward, as many a superior being would take a similar or more solid bribe. Then the "little father" lightly leaped the hedge, came rapidly down the narrow path, entered the stable, took up a handful of firewood, and passed into the circle around the fire.

"Is the pony better, little father?" said his hopeful daughter signalling to him.

"No," he said sulkily, "not much better, i' faith. I doubt much if some one has not been tampering with her. She's badly drabbered, I'm thinking."

"Nonsense, Pete," said Kerins rising, "no one around here would drab the pony."

"If she is," said the "little father" in a fury, "many a balor will be drabbered before the New Year dawns."

"Sit thee down, little father," said the old woman, "sit thee down and take thine ease — "

"No, woman," he said. "What have we but that little pony in life? Take that away, an' we're on the road again to-morrow."

"And then Mr. Kerins could have his old castle, which he says belongs to him, through long generations of freebooters and sea-rovers — chamber for smuggled goods, cave for dead bodies, and all."

But Kerins protested loudly. He meant nothing — nothing at all. He would not take the old place, ghost and all, for a song, "although, Judith," he said, "I guess that ghost has as much flesh and blood as you."

If he had known how near he was to be torn by that ghost, he would not have been so self-confident. But Pete knew it and beckoned him forward.

"I must see you home. The nights are dark, and there are dangerous people abroad. Come, Mr. Kerins, I must see you home."

Kerins protested; but the "little father" was obdurate, and both staggered up the rough path, or boreen, that led to Crossfields.

"The Duggans are not stirring to-night," said Kerins, as he looked down into the dark valley where a few lights were still twinkling. Then the dog gave tongue again; but, recognizing his master, he leaped and sprang upon him as if he would say:

"Welcome! Where were you? Queer things have been happening here, which my canine intelligence cannot fathom. Now, things may be cleared up."

And when Pete laid his hand on the dog's head to caress him, Snap turned away sulkily and growled.

"What has come over Snap?" said Kerins, lighting a candle. "I thought he and you were great friends."

"So we are! so we are!" said Pete cheerfully. "But you know dogs are dangerous at night even to friends."

But Snap had gone over, and after sniffing and mouthing around the drunken men, he lay down between them, and placed his huge head on his front paws in an attitude of aggressive watchfulness.

"You see how safe everything is with such a dog," said Kerins proudly.

"Yes! everything is very safe," said the "little father."

"Good night!"

"Good-night!" said Kerins. "By the way, Pete, I think I'll take that ugly lass of yours in service. I'll give her good wages, you know, and plenty of good food —"

"You must ask herself," said the "little father."
"She has a will of her own."

He made his way home in the mist and fog; but before he was half-way down the hill, he heard his daughter's voice aloud on the midnight mists:

We sow not, nor toil, yet we glean from the soil
As much as its reapers do;
And wherever we rove, we feed on the cove,
Who gibes at the mumping crew.
So the king to his hall, and the steed to his stall,
And the cit to his bilking board;
But we are not bound to an acre of ground,
For our home is the houseless sward.

CHAPTER XI

A CHALLENGE AND ITS ANSWER

"THE Duggans are not stirring to-night!" said Kerins; and he was right. Down there in the hollow where the house nestled in its clump of trees, no Christmas lights were visible, like those in the houses, scattered here and there, in the vicinity. It was a sad Christmas there, and the reasons were these.

No sooner did Dick Duggan and his comrades, ill-disposed fellows from the neighbourhood, realize that they had gained a triumph over the parish priest through the terrorism they exercised over the tenantry, than they also realized that they had gained a Pyrrhic victory. They adjourned to a public-house in the village immediately after Mass, and spent the afternoon drinking there. But even on their way thither, they were passed by silently by group after group of peasants, who, with heads hung down, and sulky visages, seemed to acknowledge their own shame, and, at the same time, to be enraged against the men who had led them into it. These had all the consciousness of a great crime; and they drank heavily to drown it.

Late in the afternoon, when the night was just falling, Dick Duggan made his way home, having parted with his comrades just outside the village. All that day, since Mass time, there were storms raging in the household. One of the boys defended Dick's action, and the sister, with the usual illogical prejudices and temper, was bitter against the parish priest. She seemed to take it as a special offence that he had come to church that morning, accompanied by a young lady, whom no one

as yet knew to be his niece. The father was silent, as all these men are, taking no sides, and seeming to regard the whole discussion as a neutral who had no interest in it. But the old woman was overwhelmed with shame and sorrow; and the whole afternoon she passed from paroxysms of tears to paroxysms of anger; and it was difficult to say which of these it was most harrowing to witness.

When Dick with somewhat unsteady feet crossed the threshold of his home that Christmas night, it was well for him that his senses were more or less dulled by drink; for he could hardly have borne the torrent of contempt and anger which his mother poured forth. For a few moments she was silent, as if wishing to allow the spectacle of his degradation in drink to sink into the souls of her audience, and then she let loose the floods of anger and hate.

"Wisha, thin," she said, facing him, as he sat insecurely on the settle in the kitchen, "isn't this nice business I'm after hearing about you this morning?"

She spoke calmly, but it was an enforced calmness, as if she were storing up her wrath for the final explosion.

"What?" said Dick, open-mouthed, and with watery eyes trying to fix his attention on his mother.

"What?" she replied. "You don't know, I suppose. You don't know, you — blagard, what the whole parish witnessed to-day; and what the parish will be ringing wid' whin we are in our graves."

"Wah'r you talkin' about?" said Dick, trying to be angry in turn.

"I'm talkin' about you, you blagard, an' thim that wor wid you this mornin' whin you insulted the minister of God. To think that a child of mine should ever lift his hand agin God's priesht! To think that I rared a ruffian that has disgraced us forever! How can we ever lift our heads agin? Or face the dacent people — we who wor always respected in the parish? Where did the black drop come in, I wondher, for the Duggans and Kellys wor always clane and dacent people? The ould boy

must have somethin' to say to you, you blagard; and shlipped in the black blood somehow or other; for 'twas never hard in our family afore that we wint again the prieshts!"

"The prieshts must be taught their lesson too," said Dick, waking up a little. "We're not goin' to lave prieshts, nor annybody else, ride over us."

"And who was ridin' over you, you ruffian?" said his mother. "What had the priesht to say to you or the Yank outside? He had nayther hand, act, or part in your thransactions. Well become that gintleman, who's the talk of the counthry for his larnin' and knowledge, to come between a parcel of amadhauns like ye, that can't bless yereselves. Begor, we're comin' to a quare pass, whin a gintleman like our parish priesht must come down, if you plaze, and turn out wan farmer to plaze another."

"He shouldn't have imployed the grabber's nephew in his school," said the daughter, who took it as an insult that the parish priest had not promptly yielded to the popular demand.

"Indeed?" sneered the old woman. "The parish priesht of Doonvarragh must consult an *onshuch* like you, that knows no more about a school than a cow does about a holiday, whinever he is to appint a school-master. Wisha, thin, perhaps, you had a notion of the place yerself, me fine lady! You could tache 'em pot-hooks I suppose, and to say their prayers backwards, like the divil; and it isn't much of that same you're fond of doing. You'd rather be looking in yere looking-glass than in yere prayer-book anny day, I'll warrant you!"

"There! There!" said the old man interfering, "let us have some pace and aize this Christmas night, at all events!"

"Tisn't I'm disthurbin' yere pace, John Duggan," said his wife, "but thim that's brought shame into this house. Oh, wirra! wirra!" she cried, sitting down on the sugan chair near the fire, and bending herself back-

ward and forward, opening out her hands in an attitude of sorrow and despair, "to think that I should see the day whin a son of mine would disgrace me! To think that for two hundred years, no one could pint a finger at the Kellys, until now! Manny and manny a time I hard my mother say, God rest her sowl! that no wan ever could lay a wet finger on a Kelly, or thrace anny maneness to the family. An' sure the Duggans, too, were dacent people enough. But now, now, oh! wirra! wirra! 'tis a sore and sorrowful day for us; an' a day that 'ull be remimbered. For sure, every wan knows that nayther luck nor grace ever followed a family that had hand, act, or part agin a priesht. An' 'tisn't to-day, nor to-morra, we'll know it. Whin I'm in my cowl'd grave, an' the sooner God takes me to himself now, the betther, praised be His Holy Name! there'll be trouble an' sorra on thim that come afther me — "

"There, there, Nance!" said her husband, who was more deeply affected by his wife's sorrow than by her anger, "what do you want makin' yersel' sick in that way? Sure, what's done, is done, an' there's no remedyin' it now!"

"That's just what throubles me, John Duggan," she replied, not looking around, but still continuing her soliloquy before the fire, "that's just what's throublin' me. There's no rimedy, there's no rimedy, as you say. The curse of the Almighty will fall on us, and there's no hand to put His back. Look at the Mullanys. I remimber when they wor the finest family in the parish — fine boys and bouncing girls; an' look at 'em now. Wan dying of decline, another up in Cork madhouse; another across the says, and no tidings of her! Look at thim Condons! I remimber whin they war milkin' twinty cows; and now they're glad to get a sup of milk in charity from the naybors. And this d—d blagard," she cried, her sorrow rising into a sudden fury, as she snatched up a burning stick, and flew at him, "wid all thim examples before his face — Git out of my house, you ruffian, and

never set foot inside my dure agin. Git out, and go to them that are betther company for you than your ould mother, and never let me see yer face agin!"

She would have struck him with the lighted brand, and he would have never resented it, so deep and awful is the reverence in which these Irish mothers are held by their children, but the old man interfered, and dragging away the boy from his mother's fury, he said:

"Come out, Dick, and lave some pace here this blessed night. Come out into the haggard, I say!"

The young man seemed to hesitate, but his mother said:

"Go out, as yer father bids you," she says, "or we'll have blood spilt on the flure to-night. Go out, an' take wid you, if you can, the curse you've brought on this dacent house. An' sure wid wan like you widin the walls, 'tis no place for the blessed Christmas candle to be lighting."

And going over, she blew out the Christmas candle, that had been burning since midnight. It seemed so like the ceremony of public excommunication from the Church, of which the peasantry retain very vivid, if sometimes erroneous, traditions, that great awe fell on the entire household circle; and, as the smoking wick flared, and sank and died away, a darkness, as of death, or something worse than death, fell on the place. The girl fell on her knees to pray, and the men filed out, one by one, into the night.

The little party of three, gathered around the pastor's fire after tea, was a pleasant one. Despite the events of the morning, the spirits of the two priests had risen joyously; and it seemed as if his youth had been given back to the old man. It might have been the presence of his niece that had restored his long-lost faith in humanity, for nothing seems to redeem the race except the freshness and buoyancy and hope of childhood, or the ingenuous charms of early youth, as yet unspoiled by self-consciousness, or a sense of the deadly perils of life.

Tea was over, and they had drawn their chairs closer around the fire, for though the night was warm, the cold chill of damp was in the air, and there is a friendly look about a fire apart altogether from its utility. Dr. William Gray was in his happiest mood. Seated in his armchair, and with his handkerchief spread out on his knees, and with a pinch of brown snuff in his fingers, he went over and recalled and narrated scene after scene in his college days, told quaint stories about professors, whose names, once famous, had long sunk beneath the waters of oblivion; and then passing on to his priestly life, with all its varied experiences, he told story after story, each one more humorous, more quaint, or more tragic, than another. His two hearers listened spellbound, for he was a first-class *raconteur*, and could throw humour or pathos into his voice, especially as he spoke of the contrasts between his own consciousness and the deadly terror he used to inspire into the minds of the people. He told of a famous election, when the bribing parties used to go around dressed in women's clothes to avoid recognition, and how bribes used to be placed on the slabs of tombs by night, and intimation be given to voters to seek them in such uncanny places; and how a certain ghost used to pocket those bribes, and frighten the very lives out of the dishonest burgesses who sought them. And of a certain night, when spies were placed by the opposing parties around his house, and how he discharged an ancient blunderbuss into the midst of them. And how he restored to speech and hearing a certain dumb and deaf impostor, by having her taken out in a boat unto the deep seas, and flung overboard by the faithful mariners. He recalled snatches of old ballads he had composed at election-times, with sundry comical refrains, and topical allusions, which would be then unintelligible. And he told also of certain weird and supernatural wonders he had witnessed in the course of a long missionary career — strange manifestations of the terrific powers that lie veiled behind the silences of Immensity, and that rarely,

but indubitably, break through the close veil and mask that hide the faces of spirits from the eyes of flesh, and muffle the sound of voices that we would give worlds to hear. Ah, yes! a priest doesn't reach his three-score years and more without experiencing the presence of many witnesses to the Unseen — that awful world, that lies so close around us, and envelops us in its mysterious folds, but which we in vain try to penetrate by the eye of intellect or the eye of sense, until we pass from the shadow and the symbol unto the Truth. He spoke of all such things with a certain awe and mysteriousness in his voice, that deeply impressed his hearers, not with a creepy feeling of dread for jabbering and gibing spectres, but with that reverential sensation of holy fear which such things have a right to demand. And his curate, listening with all his ears to these interesting narratives, spoken so calmly, almost so indifferently, by this great man, caught himself wondering, again and again, whether this fascinating and delightful old priest could be the same as he who was shunned and dreaded by the priests of half the diocese as an unreasonable and intractable old autocrat, and whose name was a synonym of terror in half the parishes around.

Henry Liston was sinking into a state of blissful scepticism about human opinions in general, so amply refuted by the common estimate of this man, when a loud, single knock was heard at the hall-door.

There was instant silence in the group by the fire-side.

"A sick-call!" said Henry Liston. "No Christmas Night was ever known to pass without a sick-call." The pastor looked serious.

There was the sound of footsteps in the hall, and then the timid knock at the door.

The old housekeeper came in and announced that a man wanted to see the parish priest.

"Get his name!" said the latter.

"I think 'tis Duggan, sir!" she said, closing the parlour

door gently behind her, and speaking in a whisper. "Dick Duggan — and he has the sign of drink on him!"

"That's the scoundrel that kept the people back from the collection this morning," said Henry Liston, "and that mocked and jeered at you."

It was an unhappy word. The pastor's forehead, a moment ago calm and unruffled, drew down into an angry frown; his eyebrows bent in, and his thin lips, on which a minute ago was a smile and a laugh, now grew thinner and closed together in a firm, rigid line of determination. After a moment's pause, he rose up and went out.

It was Dick Duggan. When he had left his father's house under the sting of his mother's tongue, he had wandered wildly up and down the haggart behind the plantation that skirted their boundaries. The scene with his mother had almost sobered him; but he was tortured with misgivings about his own conduct and with hate for everyone that rebuked him. One moment, his temper broke into a furious storm of wrath as he recalled the bitter words that had fallen from his mother's lips; the next, a feeling of dreadful terror, that caused the perspiration to burst out in cold beads on his forehead, came down on his abject and degraded spirit, when he remembered the prophecy his mother uttered as to the curse that was sure to fall on anyone who had opposed or insulted the minister of God. It was in such a mood of agony his father found him. The old man, although equally bitter about the loss of Crossfields, did not sympathize with the extreme measures all his sons, but especially Dick, had taken. Yet he had a latent feeling of gratitude toward him, for so zealously espousing the family cause against the stranger.

"I am thinkin', Dick," said the old man, removing the short pipe from his mouth, when he had recognized his son in the darkness, "that we'd betther ind this."

"Ind what?" said Dick sullenly.

"Ind all this dissinsion," said his father. "We've got enough of it."

"'Twill never ind," said Dick, savagely, "till the grabber goes out of Crossfields."

"That's wan thing," said his father sententiously, "and we may put it aside for the present. I'm spakin' of our dissinsion with the priesht. Betther ind that."

"'Twasn't I begin it," said Dick. "Let him that begin it shtop it, an' not be goin' agin the people."

"You mane about the tacher?" said his father.

"I do," said Dick. "Let him sind Carmody away; an' there'll be pace in the parish."

"But, afther all," said his father, "what has the bhoy done? Shure there's nothin' agin him."

"Nothin'?" said Dick, in utter amazement at his father's perversion. "Nothin'? Isn't he Kerins's nephew be the mother's side? Isn't that enough, an' too much?"

"'Tis bad enough," said the father, "but how can the bhoy help that? Sure, 'tisin't his fault, if his uncle is a grabber?"

"Yerra, what's comin' over you?" said his son, irreverently. "I never hard them sintiments afore."

"I misbedoubt me," said his father, "but we're wrong. In anny case, be said and led by me, and make your pace with the priesht an' with God. You hard what your mother said."

It chimed in so neatly with Dick's reflections when he was not at fever-point, that he grew silent. After some reflection, he said:

"What would you want me to do?"

"Make your pace with the priesht, I say," said the father roughly, feeling that he was gaining ground.

"Yes, but how am I to face him? Begor, I'd rather face a mad bull."

"They say he's aisy enough, af you take him aisy," said his father. "The night is airly ayet. He's hardly over his Christmas dinner; an' if ye were to walk down —"

"Yerra, is it to-night?" said Dick. "An' at this hour of the night? Begor, he'd throw me out on my head."

He's a hard man, an' you know it. Look at thim poor girls of the Comerfords that he dhruv to America last year; an' that poor girl of the Clancys that died of fright in her confinement. He has an awful tongue; an' the divil mind him if he's getting it back now."

Clearly, Dick's temper was running up to fever-point again.

"Thin," he continued, "he can't lave even his curates alone. There, nothin' will do him but to get poor Father Conway removed, and bring that *caushtheen* here, who ought be under his mother's wing ayet."

This uncomplimentary allusion to our young curate did not please his father, who at once cut short the discussion.

"Very well," he said. "You won't be said, nor led by me or your mother. Thin you'd betther be lookin' for your night's lodgings elsewhere; for, be this an' be that, you'll not shleep undher my roof till you make your pace with the priesht."

And he turned away abruptly.

Thus driven unexpectedly into a corner, Dick Duggan began to reflect. Clearly things were turning against him. The hero of the chapel-yard in the morning was the beaten coward in the haggart at night. He shivered as he thought for the first time that he was homeless, and under the awful shadow of a curse. But then the dread and shame of facing his parish priest became overpowering. Agitated and nervous, but driven by some secret and involuntary emotion, he found himself on the high road leading down to Doonvarragh. He strode on, not with any direct object, least of all with the wish to comply with his father's orders. Then, after walking a couple of miles, and meeting no one, for the people never venture from their own hearthsides on Christmas Night, he found himself suddenly in front of the public-house, where he had been drinking all the morning. He knocked rather timidly; and, when invited to enter, refused, because it always seems an intrusion to trespass on the privacy of

families on Christmas Night. He asked for a glass of whiskey and got it, drinking it hastily outside the door. He then asked the hour of night; and was told it was just past eight o'clock. He then strode forward. That glass of spirits was a complete knock-down blow to reason, just like the sharp blow of a powerful athlete when his beaten adversary is rising helplessly from the ground. Before he could realize his position, he was standing in the hall of the presbytery, the great figure of his parish priest towering over him, and the sharp voice piercing his ears:

"Well? What do you want?"

Dick shuffled from one foot to another, and looked dumbly at the priest.

Again came the sharp question, like a pistol shot in his ear:

"Well, well. Come, what do you want?"

"I kem to shay —" said Dick, and stopped there, paralyzed in utterance.

"I kem to shay," he repeated, awed by the ominous silence, "that we wants no more dissinsions in par'sh."

"Go on," said the voice above his head.

"If you dismiss Carmody, we're goin' to forgive you — ever' thin'!"

The next moment, he felt his neck gripped by a giant, and he was sprawling, in an instant, on the gravel outside the door.

A great gloom then came down on the little circle around the fire. Henry Liston rose up, and said he should get away. Three miles were no joke at that time of night. Annie fluttered into the kitchen, her face white with alarm. Far up on the hills, John Duggan was walking to and fro in the thick darkness, waiting, waiting, until he should welcome his repentant and forgiven son, and take him into his home absolved from all sin and malediction. But a lonely figure, with soiled clothes, and face and hands torn and bleeding, was wending its way slowly up the hill, hate and fear, fear and hate, playing havoc with the soul within. And the midnight

hour struck on the hall-clock, and the Pastor of Doon-varragh was still striding up and down, up and down along the narrow strip of carpet in his dining-room, his hands tightly clasped behind his back, and his brain on fire with many thoughts, the worst and best of which was one of exceeding humiliation.

CHAPTER XII

HIS SISTER'S STORY

ST. STEPHEN'S morning broke clear and frosty, for during the night the mists had cleared, and the early dawn grew cold and still in the winter starlight. Dr. William Gray had to go to his church to celebrate early Mass, as this was one of his days of obligation; but he arranged to be back to breakfast. As usual with him now in his old age, it was not the pleasant things of the day before that recurred to his memory on waking, but that last act which, however justified, was yet the occasion of the deepest sorrow and humility to him. He tried to forget it, to shake it off, but it would recur. He was not self-disciplined enough to keep his anger in check when aroused; nor to dismiss the remorse that was its invariable accompaniment. The necessary attention and recollection at Mass relieved his mind somewhat of the strain; and it was in a better mood he returned home, and sat down to breakfast with his niece. If he had not been so proud and self-contained a man, he would have alluded to the unhappy event that had closed the simple festivities of the night before; and this would have been the happiest and surest anodyne for his painful thoughts. But this was not his way. Nevertheless, he was comparatively cheerful, although anxious; and, strange to say, his chief anxiety now was the thought, what impression would that event have made on the young American girl, who was now under his protection. For we in Ireland have a curious reverence for the opinion of outsiders: and a nervous dread lest we should figure badly in their sight.

Not a word, however, was said about the unpleasant subject; but, toward the close of breakfast, some remark passed by his niece made the old man push aside his plate and cup, and say:

"By the way, you haven't told me as yet about your father, and your life in America. I am not curious, Annie," he said, his voice taking on a gentleness that was all the more affecting because so apparently foreign to his character, "but, if I am to be your guardian now, we must make no mistakes; and you know the past always throws light on the future."

The tears started at once to the girl's eyes, for she was just entering that time of life when everything becomes wonderful and mysterious, and the feelings are just under the touch of speech; but she gently brushed them aside, and said, with just the shadow of a sob:

"There is so little to tell, Uncle. It has all passed so swiftly that my life appears to have been bunched together in a few short facts."

She stopped for a moment, and then said simply:

"You know father was an engineer—not a mere engine-driver, you know, but a civil engineer, or architect. The truth is, I hardly remember him, for during my childhood he was so taken up with his work that we never saw him, except perhaps once a month, when he would come back, worn and haggard, from some long journey. He appeared to like to come home; but he looked always anxious and fretful. The lives of men in America are pretty strenuous, Uncle."

"So I've heard," her uncle replied. "Nervous energy is calculated there by tons, not pounds."

"Somehow," the girl continued, "there seems to be no rest, no lying-down, you know, and not bothering about things, but letting them take their way. 'Tis all rush, rush; and when one thing is done, another turns up to be done. However, poor father had no rest, no home. And dear mother shared the unrest. Often and often, I caught her looking at me and my little brother

— you know I had a little brother, Billy — the dearest, sweetest, little chap that ever lived. All gone — all gone now — oh! uncle dear,” she cried in a sudden paroxysm of grief, “where *are* they gone? What *is* it all — what *is* it *all*?”

Her uncle made no reply. It was no time for theological disquisitions — only for the lonely heart to sob itself into silence. After a few minutes, the girl composed herself and went on:

“After Billy’s death, I was sent on to school. I suppose I was fretting too much about Billy. Or, perhaps they thought I was getting old enough for school; but I was sent on to the Loretto Convent at Niagara Falls; and there I spent three years.”

“Is the Convent at the Falls?” said her uncle, rather to give her time to think than through any curiosity.

“Yes, practically, right over the Falls. And do you know, Uncle, I think the place had as much to do with my — education, or what shall I call it? — formation, as even my class-work, and that was very constant, and, I think, very select and high, you know!”

Her uncle nodded.

“You know, Uncle,” the girl went on, “when you are face to face with awful things, you grow small yourself, or you shrink and become humble. Somehow, the girls at Niagara were not at all like the girls you meet in a city, although like myself they were all city girls. We used go around with a certain awe, or strangeness, as if we were living in an enchanted place. And you know, if you stood over the Falls, you couldn’t speak. No one speaks, when looking at the Falls. It is only when you come away, and the awful thunder dies away into a distant rumbling, that you recover the use of speech. Of course, the first nights we were there, there was no sleeping. But then, the first nights at home there was no sleeping either.”

“Yes, yes,” said her attentive uncle, “it is all habit, habit, the worst and best of tyrants.”

"But the sensation when you awoke in the morning, especially in winter, when the river is full, and listened to the awful rush of waters in the darkness, was almost too much. You got up stunned; and it was only after breakfast, you could face real work. For the noise was in your ears, and the tumult was in your mind; and you went around like one in a trance. You should see Niagara, Uncle. Some one says that it is Niagara that makes America what it is; that it is the electric throb of Niagara that is felt through the entire continent, and makes the Americans so wide-awake and restless."

"'Twouldn't do, 'twould never do for us," said her uncle. "'Tis the mercy of God that we have such wet skies and such a drooping atmosphere. We Irish would turn the world topsy-turvy, if we had the conditions of America in our midst."

"Would you?" said his niece, with open eyes. "Yes, indeed," she added reflectively, "I often heard mother say that father was burning himself out with brain-work and anxiety. She said it was his Irish temperament. But I always heard, Uncle, that the Irish were so lazy at home."

"So they are! so they are!" he said grimly. "Thanks be to God for that. If they ever become active, you may be sure it is always on the side of mischief. If the Lord shall ever divert the Gulf Stream from our coasts, we shall have the prettiest lunatic asylum in the world; and you know, the world itself is the lunatic ward of the universe."

"Well, now," said Annie thoughtfully, "that *does* surprise me."

And the surprise was so overwhelming that she forgot her narrative, until her uncle recalled her to it.

"But what did you learn? what were your studies? I see you have learned cooking, although my curate has a bad headache this morning —"

"Oh, now, Uncle, that's cruel; wait till I see Father Liston. I'm sure he'll admit that — well, I mustn't

boast. I believe it is thought here that we Americans never cease boasting."

"So it is," he said. "Everything is almighty in America — from the almighty Niagara to the almighty Mississippi; to say nothing of the almighty dollar."

"Well, now," said the girl musing, "that is strange. You see one must travel to see things rightly at home."

"Quite so," he said, with his usual sarcasm, "and that is why I am giving you the opportunity first, of boasting of your accomplishments (that's the word, I believe), and then —"

"Uncle, you're really unkind. Why, I always thought old priests were gentle and compassionate."

"And young priests?" he said.

"Well, you know, young priests have not seen things; and you make allowances for them."

"That is good. I must tell Father Liston how compassionate you are. But, there, we are getting no nearer the question, what have you learned, besides promoting dyspepsia?"

"Well, a little music, some Euclid and Algebra —"

"Good!" said her uncle.

"Some knowledge of Italian —"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"English Literature and Composition; needlework —"

"Can you knit stockings?" he broke in.

"N—no," she said. "But I can make lovely things in silk. Look, Uncle, I noticed yesterday that your vestments were rather worn here in front — would you let me mend them? And the altar-cloth was very poor. I shall work an *I H S* on the front, if you will allow me. And do you know — of course you don't — men never see things — the finger-towels looked dirty. If you have no objection, I'll overhaul the whole place soon —"

"Hm!" said her uncle, beginning to see dimly how the tables were being turned against him, "very good! we'll see about it. Of course, you young ladies are like unfledged curates — everything is wrong, and you are the

celestial and heavenly-appointed messengers to make everything right. Well, we'll see! Meanwhile, what I want to know is this: Did you ever learn Latin?"

"Oh, dear, yes!" she said. "I can read the Commentaries of Cæsar and the first five books of Virgil."

"What?" he cried. "Are you serious, Annie?"

"Quite," she said, simply.

"I don't believe one word of it," he said. "This is American boasting, with a vengeance."

"Well, you can try me," she said. "Have you the books in the house?"

"I think so," he said, reluctantly, rising up and going to his bookcase. He took down an old Delphin edition of Virgil, and after dusting it, he handed it to his niece. She took the ugly volume in her hands gingerly, and then laid it on the table, as if it were infected. He saw the gesture.

"You don't like Virgil?" he said, with a smile.

"I don't like dirt," she replied.

"Oh, a little dust doesn't matter," he replied. "Open anywhere, and read."

She took up a paper-knife, and carefully opened up the pages. They were water-stained and brown from age; and the type was archaic. She read on, and stopped.

"What a funny old book," she said. "The *ess's* are all *effs*; and there appears to be no regard for punctuation —"

"No matter," he interrupted, "read on!"

She read slowly, but perfectly, without one false quantity; and to his astonishment, she read as if she followed the meaning, with emphasis, and also bringing out the beautiful colour-sounds of the great Mantuan.

"That will do!" he said. "But why do you say, *virī* and not '*virē*'; *citī*, and not '*ceetee*'?"

Then his niece laughed irreverently. "Ceetee," she said, "Cectee" — There's no such word here. '*Solvite vela citi*' — that's what Virgil says."

"Very good," he replied, almost blushing under the correction. "Translate now."

And Annie did, fluently and in excellent English, without enervating the Latin expression.

Then he demanded the meaning and construction of the sentences, the tenses and conjugations of verbs, all of which the girl answered without flinching, and even with ease.

"Put down that book," he said at length. "Your teachers are to be congratulated. This is solid education, and, Annie," he said, and paused for awhile, "God sent you to me!"

The young girl was filled with emotion at the words, they sounded so strange after his brusqueness and sarcasm.

"Yes!" he repeated. "God sent you to me. But before I explain, one question more. You haven't told me how you were circumstanced after your father's death, and how your mother died."

He leaned his head on one hand, and put up his handkerchief to hide his face.

"Oh!" she said, "we were not too well off, I believe. You know, father had not much time to put by capital — that's the word, I believe, — and once I heard him anxiously speaking to mother about railways. However, when he died, we had to sell our house and furniture, and live in a flat. Then I went back to school; I spent a few vacations with companions. Once I returned home to find mother looking very ill and worn. Then I was suddenly summoned to her bedside in Chicago."

Here the girl stopped. The priest drew his handkerchief closer around his face.

"It was in a public hospital," the girl went on, although her voice was breaking into little sobs, "and mother had — not even — a private room. She could not afford it, I believe. She suffered much — 'twas tuberculosis in the throat — I believe — and that is bad and — dangerous. When I saw her — her face was sunken and blue; and when — she turned around — and rested her eyes on me — I thought I should go mad — with grief."

She stopped again, partly with emotion, and partly in great wonder at the silence of the man, whose face was turned away from her. His silence made her go on.

"I wasn't allowed to remain — they said the place was dangerous — nor even to kiss dear mother. Father Falvey dragged me away, and took me to a convent, where I remained, till all was over, and I was sent here."

Her uncle's face was still averted from her; and he listened in silence, but God alone knew with what emotion he listened to the narrative of the sad life ending in the lonely death of that sister from whom he had parted in anger so many years ago. The sorrow of the thing overwhelmed him; and he now felt grateful to the good priest who had sent him this young girl, to whom he could make reparation for any undue harshness or injustice he might have done to her mother. And then he started at the thought of how near he had been to the mistake, or crime, of repudiating this one great chance of reparation.

"You heard me say," he replied at length, removing the handkerchief from his face, "that I thanked God you had come hither. There are many reasons for it; but I may mention one now. I notice my sight is growing dim; and perhaps, after some years, I may not be able to read with any pleasure. Now, all my reading is in Latin — in fact, it is theology; and I have a hope that you may be able to read for me, after many years — after many years, if I should become —" he dared not say "blind," — "unable to read myself."

"But, Uncle, how could I read theological words? I guess they are quite different from Virgil —"

"Not so much as you think," he said. "I see that you have acquired a wonderful knowledge of Latin for a girl — wonderful! I never thought that nuns could teach Latin and Greek — do you know any Greek?"

"Not much!" she replied. "Only the Gospel of St. John!"

"Only the Gospel of St. John!" he echoed. "It is

astonishing! I won't doubt your word again, by putting you to the test. But you have no idea what a pleasure it is to have some one near me who can understand such things."

"I'm sure if I can help you, Uncle," she said, "I shall be very happy. And it will keep up my own knowledge."

"Quite so!" he said. "And you never know when you may require it. Knowledge is always useful. But you must keep up your studies. You must join my evening-class now!"

"Evening-class?" she cried. "Why, Uncle, do you keep school?"

"Yes!" he said smiling. "At least, I have had for some time two young scholars, whom I am preparing for matriculation in the Queen's College, Cork."

"Then they are young gentlemen?" she asked in a tone of alarm.

"Yes!" he replied. "Two young Wycherlys, sons of a benevolent doctor, who is very kind to the poor here; and to whom I owe a little return."

She was silent. She did not expect this; and she didn't like it. But he wished to be candid.

"Furthermore," he said, "they are Protestants; and I want to show my own people here, that if they choose to annoy me, I can equally show how little I care for them, and how much I can appreciate the honesty and manliness of Protestants."

His voice had so suddenly taken on a ring of defiance and battle, that the girl was struck silent. Strange things were being revealed to her during these two days of her Irish life, — strange, portentous things, which were quite the reverse of all she had heard from her mother about Ireland. Here, where she had dreamed, even in her young soul, of nothing but peace and holiness and reverence and tenderness, behold there are tumult and anger, and the sadness that comes from mistrust and suspicion, raised by hot passion to the intensity of mutual hate. She had yet to learn that behind all this were to be found perfect faith, and even the "Love that casts out Fear."

CHAPTER XIII

UNEXPECTED VISITS

WHEN Kerins and his protectors woke on St. Stephen's morning, they soon realized that they had been visited the previous night with sad results. Kerins was savage with them; and they with Kerins. The whole trio were very wroth with the one thing amongst them which had been decent — the dog, Snap.

"What could have that — dog been doing?" said one of the men. "He's savage enough, sometimes. Come here, you brute! What came over you last night, that you allowed a midnight thief to come in and steal and rob everything before him? Come here!"

And the great patient animal came over in his own slow, dignified way, and looked up in the face of his interrogator.

"Do you hear me?" said the fellow. "You are fed and housed to protect us. You weren't drunk. We were, as we had a perfect right to be; and we depended on you, you lazy brute. You can bark and bite at sheep and lambs. What were you doing?"

And Snap put his nose in the air, and emitted a low, long, melancholy howl. It meant clearly:

"True. I'm an unfaithful dog. I saw the evil thing done; and the evil man who did it. I saw him sneak in, and prowl around, and search your pockets, and take your revolvers. And I was silent. He said 'Snap! Snap! Good old dog!' and I couldn't bite him. Besides, what am I, but a poor dog; and how can I, with my canine intelligence, understand the ways of you great and god-like beings? That man, that thief, was a friend

of yours. He came in here; and eat your bread and salt. I saw him smoking and drinking with you there by the fire. How am I to distinguish a friend from an enemy? And how was I, a poor dog, to know whether it was a friend that was borrowing your money and your weapons, or a thief that was stealing them?"

But this howl of argument, this canine apology, was not accepted by the superior being, who kicked the poor brute into a corner, and left him, sore and whimpering there.

"Let Snap alone," said Kerins, angrily. "He's not your dog. He's mine. And it was not his fault. 'Twas your own. How often have you been warned to keep yourselves right in these dangerous times, and with such dangerous neighbours?"

"Well, master," said the fellow. "I guess you are as much to blame as us, though you were cute enough to keep yourself all right. But it seems quare that Snap, who will bite a hot iron when he's roused, never gave tongue last night."

"You were too dead drunk to hear him," said Kerins. "When I came home at midnight, all the artillery of England couldn't wake ye."

"Then you went out and left us here unprotected?" said the fellow.

"Yes! I ran down to the old castle for an hour," said Kerins, "an' whin I came back, there ye were, as dead drunk as logs, and Snap between you."

"Well, there's no good wastin' words over it now," said his protector. "It was a *frind*," he laid much stress on the word, "not an inimy, that cleaned our pockets, and took our barkers. But we'll find him out. By G—we will; and thin it will be a bad night's work for him."

The fellow was savage from his losses; and still more from the insult offered. These men terrorized the country, and to look crossly at them was a legal offence. And now, some rascal had the courage, the absolute courage, to steal into a prohibited place, defy the law of the land,

and actually lay sacrilegious hands of theft on its lawful representatives and defenders. It was too bad. And they were determined to resent and revenge it.

Hence, a few days afterwards, as old Mrs. Duggan was throwing out some refuse into the fragrant pit before the door, she was startled at seeing the local sergeant of police and a constable entering the yard. They came slowly along; and then courteously knocked on the half-door. Being bidden to enter, they politely showed a warrant for the search of the premises.

"Yerra," said the old woman, "an' what are ye searchin' fur?"

"Well, that's our business, ma'am," said the constable, "which we'll tell you if we finds anythin'."

The men were out; and only the old woman and her daughter were present; but the two officers were very gentle and respectful; and, although they made a thorough search, and overhauled everything in the place, they discovered nothing but an old, disused gun, which, although it was held without a license, was so utterly worthless that they disdained to take it away with them.

"Now, I can tell you what we came for," said the man. "There was a robbery committed next door on Christmas Night — a double robbery of money and arms; and suspicion naturally fell upon your house, as your people are at variance with Kerins."

"Well, thin," said the old woman, flaring up in defence of the honour of her household, "whoever sot ye upon us knew nothin' of us an' ours. 'Tis thrue that we have a variance with this Yankee man; but none of our seed, breed, or generation wor ever guilty of robbing and stalin'. I expect 'twas thim blagards theirselves, when in their dhrink, lost their money and their guns; for, begor, they're never sober, night or day; an' whin they're dhrunk, faix we're afraid to go outside the dure, for fear we'd have the heads blown aff of us."

"Well," said the sergeant, "at least, we can say we have found nothing to incriminate any of your family.

But, as a friend, I'd advise the boys to be careful of themselves. They're saying things, that, if anything happens, will tell with a jury, against them."

"Thank you kindly," said the old woman, gratefully. "But I'm afeard we'll never know pace agin here."

The same afternoon (it was early in the New Year), one of the leading members of the Defence Union, whose representatives were lodged with Kerins for his defence, called on the parish priest. It was the first time a landlord had ever crossed the threshold of his door; for, although he was known to be a strenuous and bigoted supporter of law, whether civil or ecclesiastical, and knew no cause for dispensation, and no excuse for revolt, meeting every objection with the iron formula: *It is the Law!* nevertheless it was also known that he was, in every sense, the father of his people, and their stern defender against oppression of any kind. It is a position which, in Ireland, is scarcely understood by those who have landed interests in the country, or even by the people themselves. If a priest utters a word in defence of his people, he is at once reputed an agitator and revolutionary; if he opposes the popular will from reasons of conscience, he is set down by the people as a friend of their oppressors, and by the governing classes of the country as a conservative ally. The character of Dr. William Gray seems unintelligible — a protector of his people and keenly alive to their interests, yet a strenuous supporter of law, and an equally strenuous opponent of lawlessness. And yet, this is what he was during life, and consistently to the end.

He treated his visitor with all the courtesy due to his rank, bade him be seated, and waited. The latter, with some embarrassment, made apologies for his intrusion, spoke on a few indifferent topics, and then came to the object of his unusual visit. He was somewhat awed by the appearance of this grave man, who, silent and motionless as a statue, gazed steadily through the window, a look of stern expectation in his great gray eyes.

"I do not know if you consider my visit inopportune or unexpected," he said at length, "but I came to say, on behalf of myself and my colleagues, how grateful we have reason to be to you for the stand you have taken against disorder and lawlessness in your parish."

There was an awkward pause, his listener remaining still motionless staring through the window.

The gentleman continued:

"It seems to us, that if all the ministers of religion in the country had adopted the same attitude, things would not have come to the present pass."

"That is," said his host, "things would have remained as they were?"

"Well, I mean," said the other, "that whilst the relations of the people toward the governing authorities might have been improved by slow and constitutional methods, we would not have been plunged into a violent revolution."

"I am quite with you there," said Dr. Gray, now leaning back in his chair, and spreading out his handkerchief, and taking up his snuff-box; "but would you inform me, what slow and constitutional methods were being taken by the landlord class, or by the government, to better the *awful* condition of our poor people?"

"Well, I thought," said the other, somewhat embarrassed, "that things were improving; large reductions in rent were being given; and the country appeared to be prospering, until the agitator and the professional politician came on the stage."

"I want to make a small diversion from this pleasant subject," said Dr. Gray. "Would you mind telling me where you graduated; for I think you have had a university training."

"In Cambridge," he replied. "I am an M. A. of Cambridge."

"That clears matters a little," said Dr. Gray. "I was afraid you had never been outside of Ireland, like so many of the gentry of the country, and argument there

is hopeless. Now, would you mind telling me, what country, and what age, was ever free from agitators and professional politicians?"

Then he added, holding up his fingers:

"Utopia!"

"'Tis true," said the other, reflectively. "But there is something especially rabid and sinister about Irish agitation."

"That's because you are personally concerned," said Dr. Gray. "So far as my limited reading goes, this land revolution in Ireland has been effected with infinitely less violence than any revolution in history."

"You really surprise me, Dr. Gray," said the landlord. "I have been under the impression that it has been the most truculent and unjust agitation ever recorded."

"Then I'm sorry to say that you have read history to little effect," said Dr. Gray. "You, the gentry and nobility of Ireland, have been in exactly the same position toward the people as the aristocracy of France during the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV, with this difference, that the oppression of the people, the grinding-out of all the best elements of human life, and the absorption of these elements by one class, selfish and unprincipled, lasted for the space of two reigns in France; in Ireland, it has lasted for centuries."

"Pardon me," said the other. "But was not your Church on the side of the Government then — and on the side of 'law and order'?"

"Yes!" said the other bitterly, his stern face assuming a sterner aspect. "And so much the worse for our Church! It forgot its place as the protector of the poor; and it has suffered a fearful retribution to this day!"

He was silent for a while with emotion; because it was one of the subjects on which he felt deeply. But recollecting himself, he said:

"You remember what a revenge the French took!"

The other nodded.

"Compared to the Irish, it was the revenge of wolves to the harmless bleatings of sheep."

"They have beggared us!" said the landlord, gloomily.

"It is not they," said the priest, "it is the economics of the age that have reduced your income. The steamship and the telegraph have beggared you. You have no more reason to complain than if you lost your money from a fall in stocks, or any other daily change in the money-market."

"Well," said the landlord, rising, "Whatever be the value of your arguments, there is one consequence, which, as an Irishman, and I am an Irishman, I deplore. I used to hear my father talk of his people, how loyal, how honourable, how scrupulously exact they were in matters of honesty. I am afraid that, too, has changed. I am afraid that fine sense of honour has been expelled from the hearts of the people; and that, having succeeded in political dishonesty, they are now becoming personally dishonest in their dealings."

The face of the priest flushed with anger; but, in a moment, the terrible truth flashed in upon him. Could he contradict this man? The latter went on:

"In fact, sir, what has brought me here to-day is, to take cognizance of an act of vulgar robbery committed here on Christmas Night."

"What?" said the priest. "I have not heard of it."

"Probably not," said the other. "But it occurred."

"Sit down," said the priest gloomily. "Yes, things are looking bad there."

"On Christmas Night," repeated the landlord, "some fellow, or fellows, broke into Kerins's house, in his absence, stole my men's revolvers, and then — their watches; and then — their money."

It was bad news; but a thought occurred to the priest.

"Could your men be making a case?" he asked. "For you know that is quite possible."

"I cannot say that I like the insinuation, sir!" he said, feeling that to have a grievance is to stand on firm ground.

"But, allowing it to be possible, do you think these men would like to go unarmed in the midst of a hostile population; and be supplied with new revolvers at their own expense?"

"No!" said Dr. Gray. "I am sure they wouldn't like to be compelled to pay anything, from all that I have heard. But, whom do you suspect?"

"Naturally, suspicion falls in one quarter," said the landlord. "We have obtained a search-warrant for the Duggans; and I'm sure that they are the robbers."

"I think you are mistaken," replied the priest. "The Duggans are a rough, passionate lot; but I doubt if any of them would descend so low as to steal."

"Well, we shall see," said the other. "I must now bid you Good-day! and allow me to thank you for your courtesy in according me this interesting interview, and also for your firmness in dealing with disorder in your parish, though you may deprecate it."

And then he added, in an undertone, as if speaking to himself:

"What a pity we cannot understand each other better!"

"Yes!" said the priest. "'Tis a pity! And when men like you, cultivated and well read, and with all the advantages of a university education, fail to understand us, where's the hope?"

He had led his visitor to the door. The latter paused there for a moment. He was thinking, in a half-conscious manner, of how pleasant it would be, if he could repeat that visit, and see more of this man, whose courage and intelligence seemed to fascinate him. Every emotion seemed to press toward a renewal and continuance of such happy relations. But, education, prejudice, human respect, dread of criticism, rose up at once, and said: "Nay! this must not be! The thing is quite impossible!"

He hastily said, Good-bye! and strode along the gravelled walk toward the gate.

Something similar, too, was agitating the sensitive and emotional nature of the priest.

"What a pity," he thought, "that we can never understand each other! Now, here's a man who thinks on a hundred subjects even as I. We could meet, and discuss the classics, science, human history, even theology; and it would be a mutual pleasure. Again, he thinks as I do on the subject of Law, — great and mighty conservator of the Universe and of men, — and we might co-operate and ally our forces on the side of righteousness and morality. And yet 'tis impossible — as impossible as to transfer yonder ocean to yonder hills, or bring down her satellite to the earth."

And then the subject struck him of the odious charge he had brought against the people of the parish. Could it be true? Had the people gone down so low as to have become mere vulgar thieves and pickpockets? He saw clearly the terrific change that was coming over the people — the people, so dear to the heart of every Irish priest. He saw the old spirit of loyalty to each other disappear; and a new hateful spirit of distrust and suspicion arising. He saw how the "ould dacency" was gone — that manly, honourable feeling that existed beforetimes in the hearts of the people, and would make them rather suffer death than dishonour. He knew that men now shirked their lawful obligations, and defied shopkeepers to attempt to recover their debts by decrees. In a word, the terrible truth came back, enunciated by this landlord, that having succeeded in their political struggles, they had lost, or were losing, the sense of personal obligations; and he groaned in spirit. He knew well that the canker of modern greed had eaten into the hearts of the people; and that the soul was nearly dead. And yet — thieves, midnight thieves, pickpockets? No! he refused to believe that.

CHAPTER XIV

A GREAT — ARTIST

NOTWITHSTANDING his sarcastic remarks on Henry Liston's projected improvements, the good pastor was determined to make his young curate happy; and, as one of the elements of happiness is a comfortable house, he deputed a certain contractor in the neighbouring town of M— to send up painters and paper-hangers to the curate's house at Athboy, with definite instructions, however, that things should be done on a more modest scale than the ambition of his young confrère desired. And as the contractor just then was short of hands, he was obliged to send a combination of painter and paper-hanger in one person, named Delaney, or rather Delane. This person, however, was quite equal, both in dignity and efficiency, to the double rôle. He had been in London, serving his time to some master-painter, and he had had marvellous experiences which seemed to change and develop according to the nature of the place in which he happened to be at work. He had an impressive manner, rather supercilious, until he brought his subjects to his feet, when he relaxed a little; and he had a face that would not be considered remarkable in Italy, but which should have made his fortune anywhere outside that favoured land.

It was a handsome face — the real, artist face, inherited from his Irish mother; but, from one cause or another, the pale cheeks looked a little puffed, and slightly pitted; and the thick, black hair, that fell artist-like on his neck, was streaked with premature gray.

But his was an impressive and attractive face; and

when, the first morning of his arrival, he made the house resound to some choice pieces from *La Traviata* and *Sonnambula*, the little servant, Katie, whom Henry Liston had brought hither from his native town, was prepared, like the Count in the song, "her heart and her fortune [that is, the entire contents of her master's larder] to lay at his feet." There were some reasons, however, why he was able to resist the dual temptation. It appears, as he afterwards in confidence told the young priest, that he was a blighted being, that he had already had an affair of the heart, which had brought the silver into his hair; and (but this was not a confidence, only an after-revelation) he had a decided predilection for liquid over solid refreshments.

This soon became apparent, although the young priest was anxious to close his eyes against the fact. Because, as he read his Office this first morning in the little parlour, which he intended to make his library and study, he became suddenly aware that the singing in the room at the other side of the hall had ceased. Yielding to a slight feeling of curiosity, he crossed the hall. The artist had vanished. A pile of paint-boxes was on the floor, and a few brushes. A painter's apron was flung over an arm-chair, and a ladder leaned against the wall.

Henry Liston pulled the bell, and Katie appeared.

"Where's the painter gone?" he said.

"I don't know, sir!" she replied. "I thought he was here."

Henry went back to read his Office.

About noon, the artist strolled leisurely in, and commenced an *aria*, just where he had left off at ten o'clock; and when the young curate entered the room, he was leisurely sorting paint-cans and brushes.

"I thought you'd be half way through your work by this time," said Henry, not without some trepidation, as the artist calmly went on doing nothing. "And do you know, Delane," he continued, "I fear you have been drinking."

The artist looked calmly down on the young priest, and said:

"No, sir, not drinking, oh, no! Trying to get up an artificial stimulation of the blood in the brain for this important work? well, yes! I may admit that."

"Do you mean that you cannot work without stimulants?" said Henry.

"No, sir," said the artist. "I don't mean that. I can do ordinary work in an ordinary manner. But, where there is a severe mental strain, I need the help of stimulants, — in a moderate manner, in a moderate manner."

"But where's the severe mental strain here?" said the bewildered Henry. "You have got to hang some paper and paint some wood-work, that's all!"

The artist laughed loud and long, and somewhat sardonically.

"Well, sir," said he, recovering himself with an effort, "as the poet says:

Where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise!

There's no use arguing that question. Here are the cans; here is the oil; here are the brushes; and here is my palette. Now, here also is the exact tint in which the architraves and panels are to be painted. Would you be pleased, sir, to mix them for me?"

"I'd rather not," said Henry, drawing back. "'Tis a trade I haven't learned."

"Not a trade, sir!" said the artist gravely, and with a slightly offended tone. "Not a trade — an *Art* if you please!"

"All right!" said Henry. "But if it is an Art, I presume you have been initiated in it, and that now it comes as easy as walking."

The artist again laughed loud and long. Henry was slightly disconcerted. He began to feel his inferiority.

"Did you ever hear of an artist named Tintoretto?"

said the great man, pouring out a little dust on his palette, and moistening it.

"Oh, yes!" said Henry. "Often!"

"Do you know why he was called Tintoretto?" queried the artist.

"No!" said Henry. "I suppose from the place in which he was born!"

"No, sir! but because of his marvellous power of distinguishing colour in all its beautiful shades. I belong to the school of Tintoretto!"

"Do you really?" said the curate, with open eyes.

"Yes, sir!" he said, as if he would like to speak modestly, but circumstances were compelling him to be boastful. "I have studied in that school. Titian for colour — crude, raw colour. Raffaello for design —!"

"Ah, Raffaello," broke in Henry, with enthusiasm. "The master-mind of all!"

The artist grew suddenly silent and even solemn. He wasn't exactly offended. He only felt as if a youngster had blundered badly; and he was called upon, as a matter of conscience, and against his will, to whip him.

"I don't think much of Raffaello!" he said sadly.

"What?" said Henry Liston. "Raffaello of the Cartoons — Raffaello of the Sistine Madonna; Raffaello of the — the — why, next to Michael Angelo, he is reputed the master-artist of the world!"

"Ah!" said the artist sadly, "there's the *amachure* again!"

And a deep silence followed, — the curate extinguished; the artist sadly mixing colours on his palette. Suddenly, an idea seemed to strike him, as he felt there was no use in carrying on a conversation in Art with the "*amachure*."

"The walls have not been prepared, sir!" he said, pointing to the walls of the room.

"Prepared?" said Henry. "How? by whom?"

"These walls should have been prepared by some labouring person," said the artist. "The old paper torn down, the walls smoothed, etc."

"Why, that's your work!" said Henry dubiously.

"My work?" said the artist. "My God, sir," he continued, "this is too bad. I never work except where the place is prepared by one of these labouring persons. Have you a labouring person around the premises? It's an awful waste of time."

And he looked at his watch.

In despair, Henry ran out to fetch in his man-of-all-work, Jem. The artist vanished.

Jem came in reluctantly. He had been smoking leisurely in the stables, and contemplating space.

"This painter," said the curate, "expects this place to be prepared for him. We must pull down all that paper and clean up the place. Where is he? Where's Delane?"

"Where is he?" said Jem, sulkily. "Where is he, but where he always is, his head stuck half-way into a pint down at the 'Cross'?"

"Oh, no, no!" said Henry Liston. "Don't say that! I found him a most intelligent man. He has read a good deal."

"He's the biggest blaggard in Munster," said Jem. "He'd drink the say dry!"

"Well," said the curate, taking off his coat. "Here goes! As no one else will do it, I must do it myself."

And Jem got ashamed of himself, when he saw his master in his shirt-sleeves; and both set to, and had the whole place in fair order when the artist returned.

"Ha!" said the latter, carefully scrutinizing the work, and passing his hand over the wall to find any roughness or stubborn shreds of wall-paper. "Very good, very good, indeed! Very good for a labouring person!"

"That question of labouring persons, sir!" he said, when Henry returned, clothed and washed and in his right mind, "is the question of the future. It is looming up like a thunder cloud on the horizon and some day it will break, and shed fire and brimstone on the land."

"I think if you commenced here!" said Henry, pointing to the wall near the fireplace.

The artist shook his head; took his brush and made a dab of paint near the door; and then retired to the window to see the effect. It was not quite satisfactory.

"As I was saying to you about Raffaele," he said, rubbing out the paint, and shedding some fresh powder on his palette, "he is very much overrated. Michael is not so bad. But Sanzio is overrated."

Here he made another dab, retreated to the window and shook his head, and took up his palette again. Henry sat down in despair.

"When I was in London, the master-painter said to me one day, 'Delane,' he said, 'you have no business here. You are an artist, not a tradesman. I see it in your eye. I see it in the contour of your face. Now, you are to go every day to South Kensington; and sit down. You are to do nothing, but rest your weary brain, and study the works of the masters. Look at no inferior picture,' he said. 'It will ruin your genius and your taste. Keep a steady eye on the masters. Your wages will be paid as usual' —"

"By Jove! that was generous!" said Henry Liston, forgetting himself, and carried on by the gracious humbug that was addressing him.

"Well," said the artist coolly, "it was, and it wasn't. He expected a reward. He expected to turn out the greatest mind of the century."

"'Twas a pity he was disappointed," said Henry.

"He was," said the artist, "but the fault was not mine. I was blighted in the bud."

The "memory of the past" struck him silent, and Henry noticed, with much sympathy, that he took out a particularly dirty handkerchief, and stealthily wiped away a tear. It was too pathetic; and Henry to relieve the tension of sympathy asked him to continue his narrative. He sniffed a little, gave a little cough, and went on:

"As I was saying, sir, I went every day to the Gallery;

and, as I had been ordered, I sat down and studied. Round about me, a crowd of *amachures*, ladies and gentlemen, were looking, watching, daubing, and spoiling acres of canvas, in front of the Cartoons. I watched, studied, and — was silent. One day, as I was about drawing my final conclusions about these Cartoons, a gentleman paused, and stood by me. ‘I notice,’ he said, ‘that you have been here every day for some weeks, studying the Cartoons; and I also noticed, if you will pardon the observation, that you have the artist face — I see it in your nose, in your eye, in the contour of your head, in the back of your poll, in the short upper lip that betokens genius and high breeding. Now, I am anxious to get an impartial and honest opinion about these pictures. There’s no use in asking these,’ he said, pointing to the rabble around, ‘but what is *your* candid opinion? Fear not. I am your friend.’ Thus encouraged, I stood up, and, after some deliberation, I said: ‘I don’t think much of them!’”

“What?” said Henry Liston. “In the face of the whole world?”

“In the face of the whole world,” said the artist calmly, “and in the face of the stars, and in the face of the firmament, and the waters above the heavens, and the waters beneath, I said: ‘I don’t think much of *them*!’”

“That was a bold thing to say,” replied Henry. “Of course, you gave the gentleman your reasons.”

“Certainly,” said the artist. “I never give an opinion without reasons. I said, ‘You see those Cartoons, their colouring, their lights and shades?’ ‘Yes,’ he said. ‘Do you think,’ I said, ‘that these are the tints of the East, the East with all its vivid colours, strong whites, burning reds, etc.?’ ‘No!’ he said, ‘they are not. These are all pale drabs, and greens, and sickly yellows.’ ‘Don’t you see,’ I said, ‘that the whole thing wants Orientalization?’ ‘Yes,’ he said. ‘You’re right.’ I had him now on the hip. ‘Now, look at those figures,’ I said: ‘Are these the figures of Jewish fishermen, or Roman coal-

heavers or stevedores?' 'By Jove, you're right again,' he said. I saw I had now the victory, and I pressed it home. 'Did any one ever see a Jew with these gladiatorial muscles, those firm-set, square jaws, those curly pates? Is not the strength of the Jew in his brains, not in his muscles? Are these rough, coarse, muscular labourers the men who are to change the face of the world?' 'What is your name?' he said. 'Delane,' I said. 'Anything to Delane of *The Times*?' 'Well,' I said, not caring much to pursue the connexion, 'I believe there is some consanguinity, but I prefer to stand on my own legs.' 'This is my card,' he said, handing me his card. 'Any time you call at my house, I shall be happy to see you.' He went away, and I looked at the card."

"Well?" said Henry, breathless with excitement.

"'Twas the card of the first financier in Europe," said the artist. "I said to myself, 'Delane, your fortune is made!'"

"And why wasn't it?" said Henry Liston.

"Why? Oh, why?" echoed the artist in a passionate tone. "Why was Troy taken and burned to the ground, and old Father Anchises put to death? Why did Antony—Mark Antony throw up his kingdom? Why was Ireland lost?"

He stopped dramatically; and Henry Liston thought that as these were rhetorical questions, they needed no answer. But, suddenly, the artist passed into a paroxysm of despair. He struck his forehead violently with his left hand, then covering his eyes with his right hand, he allowed palette and brushes to fall rattling to the ground, whilst he exclaimed:

"Oh, Nina, Nina, thou peerless one, why didst thou come between me and my Art?"

And flinging off his apron with a gesture of despair, he rushed violently from the room.

When Henry Liston had recovered from his fright, he ventured to look. The artist was moving at the rate of ten miles an hour toward "The Cross."

That evening Henry Liston was tormented by the doubt, whether this artist was a consummate black-guard, as Jem declared; or a genius, but one of that unfortunate tribe, who could never come to any good in this world, nor probably in the next. There was no doubt that he had a strong predilection for bottled porter, and an equally strong desire to shirk his work; but Henry Liston was a sympathetic soul, and he had been lately reading a very pathetic book called *Men of Genius*, in which all the tragedies of life seemed to hang on the footsteps of every poor fellow who had the unhappy dower of brains. Now, Henry Liston did not sympathize with the attitude which the world assumed toward men of genius. It kicked them from its doors when alive, and bade them go down and get their sores licked by the dogs; but the moment they were dead, this "world" flung itself into a paroxysm of remorse, and insisted on raising marbles and other heavy materials to their deified memory. It occurred to Henry that one kind word spoken during life might be worth more to these poor tramps from Heaven than a column of adulation in the morning newspapers, when they lay stark and stiff in their shrouds; and that a morsel of bread or a stoup of wine might have been better bestowed on these poor mortal waifs when alive, than a bust of bronze in the market-place when dead.

Then he had also read how humble people, like himself, were handed down to immortality amongst men, because they had linked arms with genius even once; and how after ages, with tears in their stony eyes, blessed the memory of those who had been kind to the immortals. Hence, he had made up his mind, that as Fate had thrown him across the pathway of genius, no future generations should blaspheme him for coldness or unkindness to a gifted child of the gods. But work had to be done. The pastor, who was quite insensible to such lofty emotions, might come in at any moment, and demand in a hurtful manner, why his work was not carried forward.

So Henry Liston, who had been reading in the *Life of Sidney Smith*, how that wit and philosopher had cheated his horse into working by tying a peck of oats around his neck, which he pursued all day long and never overtook, conceived a brilliant idea of decoying the artist into something like a day's decent labour. He allowed time for the experiment, however; and the following day he did not interfere at all, but left the artist to himself. He found that, at the lowest calculation, the latter had visited "The Cross" at least six times during the day; and he found the sum-total of his day's work was one wall faintly tinted.

When six o'clock struck, and the artist promptly obeyed its summons to rest, Henry accosted him.

"I quite agree, Delane," he said, "with what you stated yesterday as to the necessity of stimulating the brain, when engaged in delicate and fancy work; but I noticed that you had to — ahem, rest six times to-day, and as each interval occupied half an hour, there were three hours lost out of your day's work."

"Lost? No, sir! Not lost," said the artist compassionately. "The energies newly granted on each occasion to the fagged and weary brain more than made up for lost time."

"And this is the sum-total of to-day's work?" said Henry, pointing to the wall.

"Quite so, sir!" said the artist. "I consider that that approaches as near perfection as it is possible for the human mind to accomplish."

"Perhaps so!" said Henry Liston. "But I should like to see a little more done. At this rate, it will take to Easter to finish."

"Ha! there's the Celtic impetuosity again," said the artist. "The fatal flaw in the Irish character — the desire to get things done, no matter how. The total repugnance to the pains that spell perfection."

Henry Liston was abashed in the sight of such genius. Nevertheless, he made his little proposal.

"Well, now," he said, "I am making a proposal that I think you'll accept. To-morrow at noon, Katie will have dinner ready for you. I shall allow you a bottle of porter at your dinner; and then, when you close your work at six o'clock, you can have as much as you please!"

"You mean, of course, sir," said the artist, with consummate politeness, "at your expense?"

"Well, that's an after detail," said Henry, diplomatically. "What do you say to the general programme?"

"Impossible, sir! Utterly impossible!" said the artist with an emphasis that swept the young curate off his feet.

"Where's the objection?" said Henry faintly.

"One o'clock to six p.m.," said the artist. "Five hours of the severest mental strain! No, sir! Impossible! Reason would totter on its throne; and you would have an artist maniac in your house!"

"Well, make your own terms, then!" said Henry impatiently. "You must keep at your work now. What do you require?"

"Must! Must! Must!" said the artist musingly. "Do you know, sir, that it is the first time in my long and chequered career that opprobrious epithet has been levelled at me!"

"Well, you know what I mean," said the curate. "I don't want to hurt your feelings —"

"And you have hurt them, sir! You have racked and wrenched the sensitive chords of my soul!"

Here the dirty pocket handkerchief was requisitioned again; and Henry Liston was in despair.

"Look here, Delane," he said at length, "I'll put six bottles of stout there on the sideboard to-morrow, if you give me your word of honour that you won't touch them until your work is done!"

"I accept the treaty!" said the artist. "But you should be careful of your language. You never know when you may drive a blighted being to despair!"

CHAPTER XV

A PEACE-OFFERING

GRADUALLY, and as it were tentatively, the people of the parishes at Doonvarragh and Athboy came back to their senses after the fevered feeling at Christmastide; and when the schools reopened after the holidays, they were speedily filled. A few hung back, waiting to see how the tide would turn, for that terrible taint of moral cowardice, and total lack of individuality, is almost universal in the Ireland of to-day. Then, when after the first few days' filtering, the crowds of children began to flock to the schools, the remnant thronged after; and Carmody, the assistant, took his place every day, and assumed his rightful command over the pupils committed to his care.

Nevertheless, and although in other ways victory remained with the pastor, he still kept his house open to the young Wycherlys for their daily tuition in Latin. It was terribly irksome to a solitary man; and many a time, when bending over his Suarez or St. Thomas, he felt his attention engaged and called away by the necessary supervision of the studies of these boys, he repented that he had been so hasty; and would gladly welcome the time when their matriculation studies would end. And now there came in the fresh complication of his niece? How was he to combine the education of those Protestant lads and his niece? Was he running risks? Again, he felt that the more he fled from Fate, the more relentlessly did Fate pursue him. Clearly, his old age was not to be, what he so often dreamed it would be, a period of unruffled serenity precluding the eternal calm.

The first evening that these home-classes opened after the Christmas holidays, Dr. William Gray said to his niece after dinner:

"Those boys will be coming down this evening, Annie. They are nice, well-conducted lads, although they have not had the guidance of a mother's hand; and you must be kind with them."

These words, "the guidance of a mother's hand," touched the heart of the young girl, who had just learned the pang of a bereavement similar to theirs. It softened her toward them, although her prejudices were very great.

"I'll do my best, Uncle," she said.

"You see," said her uncle, "you are very much advanced in your studies; so much so indeed, that you have surprised me. And you will be able to superintend their studies for a while, and direct them. I am so busy about other things."

"But, Uncle, you must let them know that I'll not stand any nonsense. If I am to direct their studies, they must be prepared to obey."

"I think you'll find that all right," said her uncle. "Get your books down, and I'll show you how to commence."

The first evening's experiment was not a success. The two boys were actually alarmed when they found that they were to be guided and taught by a particularly beautiful young girl, not older than themselves. Jack's face flushed with nervous excitement, as he took his seat opposite Annie O'Farrell. Dion stared, and stared, as if he saw an apparition.

"Now," she said, "get your books. You," she said, looking at Jack Wycherly, whose eyes fell under her glance, "must commence Cæsar at once simultaneously with your Latin Grammar. And you — what are you staring at?"

"I can't help it!" said Dion.

"Can't help what?" said Annie severely.

"Can't help looking at you!" said Dion candidly.

"If you can't find your books more attractive than me, I guess the sooner you leave here the better."

And Dion pretended to be very much engrossed in Henry's First Latin Book.

Jack was toiling slowly at his exercise: "Balbus murum aedificat!" the dreaded Cæsar lying before him. Occasionally, and very timidly, he stole a glance at the fair face that was bent over her own studies; but instantly dropped his eyes again. And for some time there was silence in the room.

The girl's thoughts were so engrossed with her novel position of teacher in classics, that she never noticed how the boys looked, or whether there was anything attractive about them. But once or twice, as she pointed in a dictatorial manner to some error in his primitive Latin composition, she noticed that Jack had silky flaxen hair, a very broad white brow, and very pale hectic cheeks. Then, she thought she would see what colour were his eyes; and she questioned him. He looked up. They were deep blue, and, in the lamp-light, dark and lustrous. Her eyes fell before his. And she wondered at herself.

After a quarter of an hour, Dion became restless. He was struggling with a difficult declension, and a new word — *navis*. It was a horrible declension, but the meaning of the word lit up the whole place, because it revealed the shining seas, and the stately vessel, full-bosomed and straining to the wind; and he saw the white foam curling around her prow and in her wake; and he smelled the tar of the ropes and the odour of the bitter brine together.

"I say, Miss O'Farrell," he said, looking up, "is *navis* the Latin for ship?"

"Yes!" she said curtly. "How do you decline it?"

"*Navis, navis, navi, navem*," said Dion, and stopped there.

"Go on," she said.

"It has no vocative," said Dion.

"Why?" said Annie.

"Because you can't call a ship!" said Dion. "It's neither man or woman. It's a thing!"

"Then why do the sailors always speak of a ship as 'she'?" said Annie. "*She* tosses, *she* heaves, *she* tacks, *she* goes before the wind! Is that so?"

"By Jove, Miss O'Farrell," said Dion enthusiastically, "you're a born sailor. Where did you pick up all that? And you're right. Then I am to call *navis* in the vocative case?"

"Yes!" said Annie curtly.

"Is there any other Latin name for a ship, besides *navis*, Miss O'Farrell?" said Jack, somewhat shyly.

"Yes!" she said promptly, "*puppis*!"

The boy flushed crimson with anger; and a deep frown came down on his forehead. He closed his book, put it aside, and rose up.

"Come, Dion," he said, "we have been trespassing here, I perceive, and are not expected to remain any longer."

Then turning to the bewildered girl, he said:

"Would you kindly thank your Uncle for his courtesy toward us —"

"What — what's the matter?" said Annie, now quite frightened. "I have said nothing — done nothing —"

She was now standing, and was nearly as tall as the elder boy. Whilst a deep flush of anger covered his pale face, she was now pale and concerned. She did not know what had happened; or what had given occasion to such feeling. Then, in a moment recovering herself, and remembering the fatal word, she said hastily:

"One moment, please, and I shall explain."

And going over to the bookcase she took down a ponderous Latin dictionary; and, opening it, she showed the two lads the word "*puppis*"; and its meaning — "the stern of a ship; hence the ship itself."

The boy murmured an apology, pleaded ignorance, asked pardon. All in vain. The girl's vanity and

temper were touched; and she remained silent during the remainder of the lesson.

When the boys were departing, they held out their hands shyly. She touched Dion's hand gently; but put down her hands by her side, when Jack offered his. And, looking him straight in the face, she said:

"I wish you to remember that, whatever be the custom amongst rude boys, it is not usual for ladies to use offensive expressions, especially when there was no provocation."

And she did not accompany them to the door. So the first lesson was not a great success.

When she narrated the little circumstance to her uncle at tea, he smiled, that is, he said, "H'm!" twice, and then said:

"It was a most awkward expression. And really, Annie, you cannot be surprised that the lad resented it. Remember, that he has hardly any knowledge of Latin; and the similarity of the words is certainly very striking."

"But," she said, "he should have known that I—that no young Catholic girl, would use an offensive word like that."

"They know nothing of Catholics, except what they have seen of us through stable boys and rough servants," said her uncle. "But, do you know, I rather like the lad's spirit. It's just what I'd have done, had I been in his place."

"Really, Uncle," she said, "is that so?"

"Quite so. I only hope that your explanation will be accepted, and that the lads won't stay away."

"But, if these misunderstandings arise too often," said his niece, "it will be rather awkward."

"No danger," said her uncle. "You'll always find that when a mistake has been made, it is generally a security against a second. And then," he added, "after all, it will brighten life a little for you; and a presbytery in Ireland is not the most cheerful place in the world for a young girl."

As the two young lads wended their way homeward, the elder got an unmerciful chaffing from his brother.

"Well, Jack, you did put your foot in it, this time, and no mistake. By Jove, but wasn't she grand though for a little Yankee girl."

"I don't think I'll go there again," said Jack, sulkily. "That girl would want to boss us out and out."

"You're right," said Dion, with a smile. "We won't go there again. I'll tell Pap what she said; and we won't say a word about the Latin for 'ships'."

"But would that be fair?" said Jack. "After all, it was I who made the mistake."

"Well, you see, the whole thing is this," replied Dion. "If you say you don't want to go again, there's an easy way out of the trouble. Just let me tell Pap, that a Yankee lass called us 'Puppies'; and there's an end of it."

"Yes! But would that be true?" said Jack.

"Of course it is," said Dion. "You asked her another name for a ship, besides *navis*, and she called us 'Puppies'."

"But she didn't," said Jack.

"Now, look here, Jack," said Dion, "where's the use in humbugging? You want to go, so do I. I think I'm first in the running too. She shook hands with me, and she refused to touch your hand. My! But, but wasn't she grand?"

"In any case, we must tell Pap," said Jack. "I'll keep nothing back from him."

The result was that, when Miss Annie O'Farrell entered the room of studies the following evening, she found the two young gentlemen before her; and, as she took her seat, she was aware that a huge bouquet of the most delicious white and purple violets, daintily placed in a pretty vase of crimson glass, was neatly arranged between her books. This time she flushed with pleasure, until her face was as crimson as the glass; and a glad smile of delight crept over her features. For she, too, had had

her anxious thoughts after the events of the previous night. Had she been precipitate? Was there any cause for her curtness and stiffness toward these lads, who were so well-conducted, although motherless? She recalled with a pang the flushed face of the angry boy — then his tone of remorse and penitence for a very natural mistake — then his downcast eyes, and the shy advance toward reconciliation that he made, and that she had rudely repulsed. She was angry with herself for having been angry with them; and finally, she thought, that, supposing they would not come again, would it mean a certain desolation in her life? The boys were good-looking, Jack positively handsome. They were nicely-mannered; and it would be a rare pleasure, although she did not deem it such at first, to train their young minds even as hers had been trained. How would it be now, if shyness or some other feeling kept them away forever? She passed that day in a kind of fevered anxiety, wondering, wondering, whether, when six o'clock struck, she should hear their knock. At last the hour came. Six o'clock struck. Five minutes after six. No knock. Her heart sank. Then at a quarter past six the familiar knock was heard; and she watched eagerly as Anne marshalled the boys into the room. Then, after some vigorous efforts to control her emotions, she came in softly, and it was then that the peace-offering and scented symbol of humility caught her senses, and her face flushed with delight. She took up the beautiful flowers, and gazed at them admiringly. Then, burying her face in them, she said gently:

"To which of you am I indebted for these?"

"Jack, of course," said Dion, grinning. And Jack kicked Dion under the table.

"To neither of us, Miss O'Farrell," said Jack, "but to Papa."

"To Dr. Wycherly?" said Annie, not too well pleased. She had been hoping that it was a penitential offering from himself.

"Yes!" said Jack. "The fact is, I told Papa all that

happened. He said I was an awfully stupid fellow; but that I should apologize and make amends. He then gathered these, and ordered me to bring them and to say how sorry I am for what occurred last night!"

"They are very beautiful," said Annie, still not too well pleased with Dr. Wycherly. "These must be costly, and hard to get just now!"

"Oh, not at all," said Dion. "Why, we have a whole acre under them."

"An acre!" said Annie. "How much is that?"

"Oh, as much as all these grounds put together. But, I say, Miss O'Farrell, you must come up and see them yourself, and let us show you Rohira, and the old castle, and the gypsies."

She looked at Jack, as if asking if he would second the request.

"Father said," he replied in answer to her look, "that it would be a great pleasure if you could come to see us. I mean some fine day."

"And if you can pull a boat, you know," said Dion, "we can let you have one, and it is great fun."

"But girls don't row," said Annie, who was an inland-bred young lady, and had never seen the sea, until she put her foot on the steamer.

"Oh, dear, yes," said Dion. "Why, Cora can turn Jack or me."

"And who is Cora?" asked the girl whose curiosity was much piqued.

"Why, she's the gypsy girl down at the Castle on our grounds. She's awfully ugly, but she can do everything almost. If you saw her fighting with her old grandmother, Jude the Witch, and giving her jaw, you'd kill yourself laughing."

"Sh!" said his brother warningly, dreading another explosion. "Better not speak of these things, Dion. Miss O'Farrell doesn't care to hear of them."

But Miss O'Farrell did; and was dying to know all about the gypsies and their ways, and whether they told

fortunes as she had read in books, and whether they were as handsome as they were said to be. But her sense of dignity would not allow her to ask questions, until the happy Dion came to her aid, although his vocabulary and method of expression were not too choice.

"Some day you must tell me all about them," she said, opening her Virgil. "Do you know that at one time people used to read their fortunes in opening this book."

The boys stared at her with open eyes.

"Yes!" she said, with professional pride. "In the Middle Ages Virgil was supposed to be a sorcerer, or magician, you know; and people used to open these pages and guess their futures from the page that first opened to them."

"Jude searches your hands," said Dion eagerly. "Of course it is all rot — humbug, I mean; although she knew all about you, Miss O'Farrell."

Here Jack nudged his talkative brother.

"About me?" said Annie.

"Yes!" said Dion. "Of course, 'tis nothing. She only knew that you had been in America, and had come over to your uncle, and —"

A pretty violent kick from Jack shut him up.

"You'll come up some day, Miss O'Farrell," said Jack, interfering, "and see all our wonders. I know Pap would be awfully pleased; and you can take away as many violets as you please."

"And we have lilies-of-the-valley, too," put in the irrepressible Dion, "and primulas, and snow-drops. You know father is a botanist, and he sends packets of these early flowers to Covent Garden, London, and everywhere."

"It must be a delightful place," said Annie, musingly. "How do you call it?"

"Rohira. It is an Indian name. Father was in India, you know, and he has all manner of snake-skins, cobras, constrictors, rattlers, ugh! the ugly things. And he has Indian knives, and swords, and funny old guns; but some

are mounted in gold and silver, and queer old heathen gods, the ugliest devils — ”

“Sh!” said Jack. “You’re forgetting yourself, Dion. Do you know where you are?”

And Jack’s remark conjured up a very unusual blush on the brazen cheek of his brother, who, however, speedily recovered himself and asked Miss O’Farrell’s pardon very nicely. And that young lady seemed to have fallen into a reverie; and altogether, there was not much serious work done that night. But at parting, Annie was very gracious; and this time she did not put her hands stiffly by her side.

CHAPTER XVI

RÖSLEIN ROTH

WITH something very like fear and trembling, Henry Liston watched and waited the result of the next day's experiment. He had little hopes that Delane would keep his engagement. And these hopes almost faded away, when, at half-past twelve, the little maid came in and asked that the artist might have a second bottle of porter at his dinner.

"He does not eat as much as a child," said Katie, with tears in her eyes, "and he says he fears he'll never get through the day."

Henry Liston paused. It was a crisis in his life. Would he be equal to it?

"Yes! you may give him another bottle," he said at last, conscious of great weakness. But then, to make up for it he added with the most invincible determination:

"But only one, mind!"

"Very well, sir!" she said.

He remained inside doors all day, although he had some business at the schools and elsewhere; but he carefully kept away from the dining-room where Delane was working, although his ears were alert to catch every sound. At first, that is, immediately after dinner, Delane was gay, and musical. He sang "My Pretty Jane," probably out of gratitude to Katie, and evidently intended for her ears, for Katie seemed to hear more knocks at the front door that day, and to linger on more various duties in the hall, than ever before. But at two o'clock there was silence; and Henry knew the tragedy had begun.

There were four hours yet to the time of release and refreshment, and it was difficult to say whether the artist or the priest suffered more during that time. For the latter's senses were on the rack the whole time, he had been so penetrated by the reasoning of the artist; and his imagination, like that of all sensitive and kindly people, ran far ahead of reason, and conjured up all kinds of doleful possibilities. Would Delane collapse? Would he break down physically, and fall off the ladder? Or would the fagged and jaded brain give way, without the accustomed stimulant, and the fellow become delirious? And then, what would the public say? They'd say, that for the sake of the price of a bottle of porter, the life of that poor tradesman had been sacrificed. It was a melancholy reflection, or rather anticipation; and when four o'clock struck, and his own dinner was placed on the table, he asked in a tone of pretended ease, concealing some real agitation, whether Delane was working steadily in the dining-room. Katie seemed unable to reply. He repeated the question. And Katie said:

"I think he is, sir! But — but — he may be dying," and burst into tears, and fled from the room.

Then, deeply agitated, the young curate rose up from his untasted dinner, and going over to the dining-room, he knocked. There was no reply. He opened the door trembling, and found the artist in a heap on the floor, which was splashed all around with paint. He rang the bell violently, and Katie came in, and flew at once into hysterics. Then he flung a pail of cold water on the prostrate artist. It had no effect beyond a convulsive shudder which at least showed that he was alive. Bewildered and terrified, the young priest looked around, and his eye caught the stately row of porter-bottles that were ranged on the sideboard. A happy, but sacrilegious thought struck him. He rushed from the room, brought back a corkscrew and a long, deep, crystalline tumbler, drew the cork, and filled the glass with the foaming liquor to the brim. Holding it to the artist's lips, he

held up his head with the other arm. A convulsive shudder passed through the frame of the prostrate man. The next moment, he had flung the whole of the liquor down his parched throat; and holding up the tumbler, he said, in a sepulchral voice:

"Quick! Again!"

Henry drew another cork, and filled the tumbler. The artist flung the contents down his throat again, and held out the empty glass, murmuring:

"Once more!"

Once more the glass was filled and emptied; and then the artist rose, and said, in a dramatic undertone:

"Richard is himself again! But," he continued, regarding the young priest with a severe look, "'twas touch and go! Never, never, never, attempt such an experiment again!"

"Are you better?" said Henry Liston, in lieu of something more appropriate.

"Better? Yes. If you mean, am I snatched from an early and premature grave? Yes, I am. But I shall carry the marks of this experiment to my tomb."

"You must be an awfully delicate fellow," said the young priest, "that you cannot go for a couple of hours without drink!"

"Delicate? Physically? No. I am as strong a man as there's in Ireland. Mentally? Yes. 'Tis the fagged and weary brain."

And, as if to support the fagged and weary brain, he leaned his head on his hands, and seemed to weep.

"At three o'clock," he said, "I knew I was near the fatal collapse; but I'm an honourable man. I had given my word; and I meant to keep it, if it cost me my life. At half-past three, I became delirious. My senses swam. My brain reeled. My intellect tottered to its foundation. I was out on a lonely desert. I saw nothing but glistening sands all around, and a pitiless — pitiless — sky overhead. I watched my camel's eye. I knew the instinct of the beast would scent water from afar. In

vain! Nothing but sand, sand, pitiless sand everywhere. At last, my beast raised his head and sniffed the air. 'Ha,' said I. 'At last! At last!' I looked! Alas! 'twas only the desert mirage — the mockery of Nature over its dying child!"

The artist paused for a moment, and then continued:

"Four o'clock struck! The scene was changed. I was out on the desert ocean! It was 'water, water, everywhere, but not a drop to drink.' 'And slimy things did crawl with legs over a slimy sea.' It was awful. Again, the pitiless sea, the brackish water, the sun looking down and laughing with his pitiless stare. The albatross! I shot it! It hung around my neck! I stroked its plumage! The Ancient Mariner! The ribbed sea-sands! The wedding guest! Why dost thou hold me with thy glistening eye! My God! my mind is wandering again! Quick! Quick! Quick! Your reverence! Or you'll have a hopeless maniac on your hands!"

Henry opened a new bottle, which went the way of its predecessors. He wished this child of genius was far away.

"Ha!" said the child of genius, "There! The mental equilibrium is restored again. But what a dream!"

He was plunged in a deep reverie. A faint knock was heard, and Katie put in her head.

"Is he — be — better?" she blubbered.

"My pretty one," said the artist. "Yes! He is better. Weep no more!"

"If you come into the kitchen, and rest yourself," said Katie, quite unheeding her master, or his dinner, "maybe you'd be able to go home all right!"

"Thanks, my angel!" said the artist, rising up wearily, and stumbling a little. "Let me lean on thee! There! Now, I shall be able to recuperate."

Henry Liston sat down to a cold dinner, heated only by a mental debate: Is this fellow a consummate humbug and blackguard, or a fallen angel?

He decided to submit the matter to the superior judg-

ment of his pastor, as all good and inexperienced curates should do; and he wrote a short note to the effect that things were not progressing rapidly, and that if the contractor could take back the child of genius and send an ordinary worker, it would be better for the progress of the work and eventually for the pastor's purse.

The result was a pastoral visit next morning. About ten o'clock, Dr. William Gray drove up, and entered the curate's house.

"Well! This fellow is doing nothing? Just what I expected. Where is he?"

Henry pointed to the door of the dining-room. The pastor strode over, walked in unceremoniously and glanced around.

"How long have you been here?" he said to the artist.

"Par'n?" said the artist, pretending to be very busy.

"I say how long have you been here? When did your master send you here?"

The artist ran his fingers through his hair, and said, meditatively:

"I think this is the third — nay the fourth day of my labours on these premises."

"And the last!" said the pastor. "Put on your coat, and leave the house at once!"

"What? This is an outrage!" said the artist grandly. "It's a libel on my profession — it's an —"

"Put — on — your — coat!" said the pastor more impressively, "and be quick about it!"

The artist put on his coat.

"Are these your paints and brushes, or your master's?"

"I have no master," said the artist grandly. "That day is gone!"

"Well, your employer? Are these your paints, or your employer's?"

"If you mean the person who pays me stipulated wages for my Art — yes, they're his!"

"Then, leave them here, and quit at once!"

And because the pastor looked threatening, and was,

moreover, a stalwart man, the artist obeyed: muttering:

"I shall consult my lawyer about this outrage on myself, and the profession I represent!"

The pastor slammed the door behind the expelled artist. There was a sound of weeping afar off from the depths of the kitchen.

"A most consummate blackguard!" said the pastor, entering Henry's room. "I'll send down a message to C— this evening, that will make his ears tingle. It seems impossible to get a decent or honest tradesman to-day. Rights of labour! The down-trodden labouring man! We are coming to a strange pass in the history of things."

From which Henry Liston, with some perturbation of spirit, conjectured that his pastor was now in one of his angry and sarcastic moods. He was hoping, silently hoping, that the great man would speedily depart. He almost regretted having sent that letter.

The pastor turned around, and surveyed the room.

"He did nothing here, I suppose?"

"Nothing!" said Henry.

"What's that?" pointing to a piano.

"A piano," said Henry. "A Collard and Collard!"

"A what?"

"A Collard and Collard," shouted Henry. "The best makers."

"And what do you want it for? Surely, you can't play!"

"Oh, dear, yes," said Henry Liston, who thought it well to use a little bluff. He went over and sat down, and ran his fingers up and down the keys. Then he stopped.

"What do you call that?"

"The first part of a prelude by Bach."

"Bach? Who was he?"

"A great composer. You have often heard of Bach, I suppose!"

"Never, thank God. And how long now were you learning that rubbish?"

"Oh, it took years upon years," said Henry. "That art is not acquired in a day."

"I should say not! That leaves you without a notion of your Moral Theology, I suppose!"

He had gone over to the bookcase; and with his dim, gray eyes close to the glass, he was peering along the rows of books. Henry's heart was beating rather wildly.

"H'm! Goethe! Is that the German infidel and profligate?"

"Well," said Henry, "he wasn't exactly a saint."

"I should say not. What is *Sammtliche Werke*?"

"His entire works — *Opera Omnia*!" said Henry.

"Let me see one of them!" said the old man.

And Henry was reluctantly obliged to find the key, and he handed down a volume of Goethe at random.

"Can you read this? Or, is it all the usual humbug and pretence of young men nowadays?"

"I know a little German," said his curate, modestly. "I can read it although I cannot speak it!"

"H'm," said the incredulous pastor. "I'll bet you can't read a line of it. Here! Read this! It looks like verse!"

And Henry took the book, and read in his best Westphalian accent the "Heidenröslein."

"H'm!" said the pastor. "Can you translate it?"

"Of course," said Henry, giving the verse a free translation.

"How is that the chorus runs?" said his pastor, holding his head down in an air of listening attention.

Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,
Röslein auf der Heiden.

repeated Henry.

"And it means?"

Little Rose, Little Rose, Little Rose so red,
Little Rose upon the heath!

The pastor poised a pinch of snuff between his fingers, and looked sadly through the window.

"Good God!" he said at length, "and is the Irish Church come to this? And what in the name of heaven are the superiors of colleges doing to tolerate this outrageous nonsense?"

"It wasn't in college I studied Goethe," said Henry. "They knew nothing about Goethe there. It was in England."

"Of course! There's what I'm telling the bishop this many a day. 'You're sending our young priests over there,' I said, 'to become half-heretics. In the name of God keep them at home; and let them learn their Moral Theology!'"

"It's never any harm to become an educated man!" said his curate, stung by his sarcasm.

"No! But what is education? Do you call that rubbish — and I suspect there's some double meaning beneath that fellow's verses — education —

Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,
Röslein auf der Heiden.

Have you any more of that German rubbish here? Here! Who's this fellow? Richter. Who's he? What did he write?"

"Oh! He's the great author of *Titan*, and *Hesperus*, and *Fruit, Flower and Thorn Pieces*, etc., etc.," said Henry.

"Anything like

Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,
Röslein auf der Heiden?"

"No!" said Henry, going over and taking down a volume. "Jean Paul wrote only prose; or rather poetry in the form of prose!"

"Who's Jean Paul?"

"Why, Richter! It is a pet name for the favourite of all German scholars."

"Very good! Let's hear what that fellow has to say for himself."

And the poor curate had to roll out the seven-footed

words of the mighty dreamer to a most unsympathetic listener.

"Very good!" said the latter. "Now, what does it all mean?"

And Henry read falteringly:

Ottomar asked, "Who annihilates them, then?" "I," said the Form, and it drove him among the armies of corpses into the masked world of annihilated men; and as the Form passed before a mask with a soul, there spurted a bloody drop from its dull eye, such as a corpse sheds when the murderer approaches it. And he was led on unceasingly, by the mute funeral procession of the past, by the rotten chains of existence, and by the conflicts of the spirits. There saw he first of all the ashy brethren of his heart pass by, and in their countenances there still stood the blighted hope of reward: he saw thousands of poor children with smooth, rosy cheeks, and with their first smile stiffened, and thousands of mothers with their uncoffined babes in their arms; and there he saw the dumb sages of all nations with extinguished souls, and with the extinguished light of Truth, and they were dumb under the great pall, like singing birds whose cage is darkened with a covering; and there he saw the strong endurers of life, the numberless, who had suffered till they died, and the others who were lacerated by horror; and there he saw the countenances of those who had died of joy, and the deathly tear of Joy was still hanging in their eyes; and there he saw all the lives of the earth standing with stifled hearts, in which no Heaven, no God, no Conscience, dwelt any more; and there he saw again a world fall, and its wail passed by him. "Oh! how vain, how nothingly is the groaning and struggling, and the Truth and the Virtue of the world!" And there at last appeared his father with the iron ball-globe which sinks the corpses of that ocean, and then as he pressed a tear of blood out of the white eyelid, his heart, which ran cold with horror, exclaimed, "Form of Hell, crush me speedily; annihilation is eternal, there live none but mortals and thou. Am I alive, Form?"

The Form led him gently to the edge of the ever-freezing field of ice; in the abyss he saw the fragments of the stifled souls of animals, and on high were numberless tracts of ice, with the annihilated of higher worlds, and the bodies of the dead angels were for the most part of Sun's light, or of long sounds, or of motionless fragrancy. But there over the chasm, near to the realm of the

dead of the Earth, stood a veiled Being on a clod of ice; and as the white Form passed, the Being raised its veil; it was the dead Christ, without resurrection, with His crucifixion wounds, which all flowed afresh on the approach of the white Form.

"Horrible!" said the old man. "And almost blasphemous. Did that fellow believe in anything?"

"He was the greatest apologist for the existence of God and the immortality of the soul that ever existed," said Henry. "I am afraid, sir, you think there have been no defenders of the common faith outside the ranks of Theologians."

"And I think rightly," said his pastor, emphatically. "What right have these fellows to be tampering with such questions at all?"

"Yet, St. Paul said in the Areopagus: 'Hath not one of your own poets said — ?'"

"That's a different thing altogether," said Dr. Gray. "I must be going. But, just a moment — how does that fellow treat the question of immortality?"

And Henry looked up and down across the page, and hither and over, and turned off many barren and unintelligible rhapsodies, and looked confused, so that his pastor said:

"Never mind! 'Tis not worth looking for! The fellow is bad enough; but not as bad as:

Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,
Röslein auf der Heiden!"

"Just wait a moment," said Henry. And then he said viciously:

"See, is there anything like this in the Salmanticenses and Emmanuel Sa?"

And he went on reading:

The sunny mist was floating downwards far away in the ether like a brilliant snow-cloud, but the mortal was retained in that blue Heaven by a long sound of music coming over the waves; the sound re-echoed suddenly through the whole boundless ether, as if the

Almighty Hand was running over the clouds of Creation. And in all the orbs there was an echo as of jubilee; invisible springs floated by in streams of fragrancy; blessed worlds passed by unseen with the whispering of ineffable joy; fresh flames gleamed in the Suns. The sea of life swelled as if its unfathomable bottom was rising, and a warm blast came to shake the sun-rays and rainbows, and strains of joy and light clouds out of the cups of roses. All at once there was a stillness in the whole of immeasurable space, as if Nature were dying of ecstasy — a broad gleam, as if The Endless One was going through Creation, spread over the suns, and over the abysses, and over the pale rainbow of the milky way — and all nature thrilled in delicious transport, as a man's heart thrills when it is about to forgive. And thereupon his innermost soul opened itself before the mortal, as if it were a lofty temple, and in the temple was a Heaven, and in the Heaven was a man's form which looked down on him, with an eye like a sun full of immeasurable love. The Form appeared to him, and said, "I am Eternal Love; thou canst not pass away." And the Form strengthened the trembling child who thought to die of wonder, and then the mortal saw through the hot tears of his joy, darkly, the nameless Form — and a warm thrill dissolved his heart, which overflowed in pure, in boundless love; the creation pressed languishingly, but close against his breast, and his existence, and all existences were one love, and through the tears of his love Nature glistened like a blooming meadow-ground, and the seas lay there like dark-green rains, and the suns like fiery dew, and before the sunfire of the Almighty there stood the world of spirits as a rainbow, and the spirit broke its light into all colours, as from century to century, they dropped, and the rainbow did not change; the drops only changed, not the colours.

The All-loving Father looked forth on His full creation, and said, "I love you all from Eternity — I love the worm in the sea, the child upon the earth, and the angel on the sun. Why hast thou trembled? Did I not give thee the first Life, and Love, and Joy, and Truth? Am I not in thy heart?" And then the worlds passed with their death-bells, but it was as the church-ringing of harmonical bells for a higher temple; and all chasms were filled with strength, and all Death with bliss.

He wound up triumphantly, and with a brave, rhetorical flourish.

"Is that all?" said his pastor grimly.

"Oh, no!" said Henry airily. "There are hundreds of pages equal to this."

"'Tis enough!" said the grim man. "But, Father Liston," he said gravely, "I'd advise you now, as your pastor, and as one that has the care of souls, to take all that rubbish out into your yard, and burn every bit of it to ashes. And then, take up the Penny Catechism and study it. It will be better for you, and better for the poor people in the long run than your rhapsodies and rubbish, and your:

Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,
Röslein auf der Heiden."

And with these words he vanished, leaving a sad heart behind him.

CHAPTER XVII

A LOWLY SAINT

WHEN Dr. William Gray reached his home that afternoon, he was in one of those moods of agitated thought that were so frequent with him, and in which he had to walk up and down his room to regain composure. He was one of those serious and lofty thinkers that looked down upon literature and art as only fit for children dancing around a Maypole. He could not conceive how any priest could find an interest in such things, which he regarded as belonging so exclusively to a godless world that he regarded it as high treason for any of the captains of the Great Army to be attracted or drawn to them. He felt exactly towards the literary or accomplished priest, as a grim and wrinkled old field-marshal would feel if he had heard that a young subaltern had stolen out of camp at midnight and gone over to the enemy's lines to listen to the strains of some Waldteufel waltz. He would accept no hint or suggestion of compromise with that mysterious "world," which, with all its wiles and magic, has been to the imagination of such ruthless logicians something like the vampire witches of mediæval romance, from whose diabolic charms there was no escape but in instant flight. The meditation of "The Two Standards," and its terrific significance, was always before his eyes. Here was the Church, stretching back in apparently limitless cycles and illimitable, if variable power, to the very dawn of civilization. Here was the mighty fabric of theology, unshakable and unassailable, and founded on the metaphysic of the subtlest mind that had ever pondered over the vast abysses of human thought. Here

were its churches, built not to music, but to the sound of prayer — great poems and orisons that had welled out of the heart of Faith, and grown congealed in eternal forms. Here was its music, solemn, grave, majestic, as if it fell from the viols of seraphs into the hearts of saints. Here was its mighty hierarchy of doctors and confessors, — pale, slight figures in dark robes, but more powerful and more aggressive than if they carried the knightly sword, or moved in the ranks of armoured conquerors. Here was its Art breathing of Heaven and the celestial forms that peopled the dreams of saints. Its literature was one poem and only one; but it lighted up Heaven, Earth, and Hell.

And there in the opposite camp was the “world,” — that strange, mysterious, undefinable enemy, taking its Protean forms from climate, race, and language. There were its theatres, coliseums, forums, opera-houses with all their pinchbeck and meretricious splendour, where all the vicious propensities of the human heart towards lust and cruelty were fanned and fostered by suggestive pictures or erotic verses or voluptuous music. There, too, were its philosophic systems, vaporous, fantastic, unreal as the smoke that wreathes itself above a witch’s caldron, or the ashes that lie entombed in the urns of dead gods. There again is its Art, fascinating, beautiful, but picturing only the dead commonplaces of a sordid existence, or the fatal and fated loveliness of a Laïs or a Phryne. And there is its main prop and support, — this literature, aping a wisdom which it does not understand, or dealing with subjects that reveal the deformities and baseness, instead of the sacredness and nobility, of the race.

“And here is this curate of mine dabbling with this infernal business; wasting his hours in subjects that would make a statue blush for modesty, or an idiot smile at their puerility. I’ll stop that. He is here to do God’s work and to save souls; and he must do it, or — go!”

He took up his Breviary to read; and the splendour and

beauty and tenderness of its imagery made the world's literature look more tawdry and thoughtless than ever. When he came to the *Te Deum* in the office of Matins, he found that instead of saying:

Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth!

the words of Goethe's song:

Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,

would come to his lips. He put down the well-thumbed volume in disgust.

"Serves me right!" he said. "When the devil gets his rhymes into your brain, the Spirit will depart. There is no room for Him!"

And lo! as he considered these things, the Spirit breathed upon him — a gentle and almost imperceptible breath; and his conscience woke up beneath it. The thought occurred to him for the first time that he had also undertaken the immediate charge of an immortal soul in the person of his niece. And what had he done hitherto for her? Nothing. He had amused her; put her in the way of pursuing her studies. But her soul!

He touched the bell; and bade the housekeeper send Annie to him.

"The day is fine, Annie," he said, when she appeared. "Had your luncheon? Well, then, put on your hat, and we'll have a stroll."

The day was fine and bracing; a pallid sun shed some lustre on the landscape; and there was a healthy sting of cold in the clear air, for the light frost lay in the furrows of the fields, and the ground was steeled near the ditches where the shadows fell. Annie in her tight warm jacket, with a little sealskin cap, decorated by one solitary bird, and the red flame of one feather, looked bright and beautiful, as she strove with the spring of youth to keep pace with the long, firm strides of her uncle. He strode along, buried in thought, rather heedless, as old

men are, of the efforts his niece was making to keep abreast with him, until they came in view of the sea, that looked cold and joyless in its vast expanses, sailless and shadowless in its gray and lonely solitude.

When they touched the loose sand, which lay piled up near the road, he relaxed a little, and then he said abruptly:

"Can you play? Do you know anything of music?"

"Oh, yes!" she said, panting and gasping a little. "I know something of music. But I am not an experienced player. I hadn't time."

"You won't have many opportunities of improving here," he said. "There's only one piano, that I know of, in the parish."

"Indeed? And who owns that? The Wycherlys?"

"No! They wouldn't be so absurd. It's this new curate of mine, if you please!"

"Father Liston? Oh, I'm so glad," she said with enthusiasm. "I hope 'tis a good one!"

"I believe so," he said grimly. "He gave as much for the thing as would buy a whole set of the Benedictine edition of the Fathers."

"That's delightful," said Annie. "Won't we have little concerts — but can Father Liston play?"

"I believe so. He played off something for me that he called a prelude. And it was — a prelude to as good a sermon on his outrageous nonsense as he ever heard. I've seen a monkey on a barrel-organ; but it wasn't half so ridiculous as a priest sitting at a piano!"

"But, Uncle dear," said Annie, "isn't it a nice accomplishment for a young priest? I can't imagine you now sitting on a piano-stool, and playing symphonies from Bach or Beethoven —"

"Yes, Bach! That's the fellow that got him into the prelude and — the sequence. But, go on! You can't imagine me sitting on a piano-stool. Why?"

"Because you are old, and venerable, and solemn. But I can imagine you sitting at an organ, like that

lovely picture of the Franciscan monk, his bare feet touching the pedals, his sandals hanging loose, and the two angels with their music-sheets in the air floating above his head."

"H'm! That's intelligible enough, although I think, that monk would be better employed praying or studying in his cell. But an organ is not a piano."

"No! But still I think 'tis lovely to see a young priest acquainted with all the masters in music and literature."

"You do? Wouldn't it be better for them to be acquainted with their Breviaries, and their Moral Theologies and the *Imitation of Christ*?"

"Well, the two can go together," said Annie, boldly.

"No!" he said, with an emphasis that startled the girl. "The two can't go together by any means. A priest is a fighter, not a play-actor. Do you suppose the devil and his legion of angels are strumming pianos — or snaring souls?"

"That's true!" said his niece musingly. "I suppose not. And I suppose the devil is very busy, Uncle!"

"He is," said her uncle — "very busy, in particular, in trying to get people to forget him."

They had crossed a long stretch of firm sand, and now emerged again into the high road, that ran under fern-laden cliffs, whence little rills of water ran down to swell the small dimensions of a stream that was ever hastening, hastening towards the great sea. Here and there, little ash-trees projected between the rocks that lined the cliff-side, their withered fronds hanging loosely in the air, pushed out by the tiny black buds that, with all the insolence of youth, were urgent for development. And far up in the air, the sharp ledges of the cliffs were fledged with pines and infant elms; and heavy fronds of bracken, that had escaped the winter frosts, hung down and festooned the black, wet stones that seemed detached from the soft earth, and were only caught by the roots that stretched from the trees above. The road here was firm

and hard, for the wintry sun never touched it; but the rime lay near the edges of the rivulet that sang and sparkled to the sea.

After a walk of about half a mile along this shaded road, they suddenly came in front of a cottage, whose gabled roof and diamond-paned windows marked it as something quite different from the ordinary white-walled cabins that form such a distinctive, if unpicturesque, characteristic of an Irish landscape.

Here the pastor stopped, and opening a little, rickety gate, crossed a narrow, gravelled path; and, without ceremony, entered the kitchen of the cottage. His niece followed; and their senses were greeted by a pungent odour of soap-suds and wet linen, whilst the air was so thick with steam that for a long time Annie O'Farrell could see nothing but the vast array of white sheets and other linen that hung in a line across the room.

"Here, Nancy," said the priest, "I have brought my niece, Miss O'Farrell, to see all your shrines and altars."

The girl rose from her bent position over her washtub; and rubbing her wet hands in her apron, she held them out, pale, and flabby and moist from her work.

"She's very welcome," she said. "But you must give me time, your reverence, to light up the statues."

"Of course, of course," he replied. "Run upstairs, and we'll look around here."

There was nothing very sightly to be seen. Great baskets of soiled clothes awaited their turn to be renovated; great tubs held the heavy masses that were undergoing renovation; and a great boiler hissed and steamed above the range. But yet, it was a pretty thing to see the white dainty tablecloths, napkins, handkerchiefs, cuffs, collars, *lingerie* of every kind, spotless and folded, and ready for human use again. It was in reality a triumph of human skill, the daily and hourly conquering of difficulties, the beautiful and fragrant ablution of all the sordidness that humanity will contract through all its daily necessities.

Annie took up a handkerchief and a collar; and with feminine instinct — for it appears to be an instinct of woman's nature to cleanse and to heal — she turned them round and round in her dainty fingers, and said to her uncle:

"They are beautifully finished. I have seen nothing like that in the steam-laundries of America."

"It is a noble life," he said, "if we could understand its significance. It is typical of the sacramental power of cleansing and purifying. And, when I add that all that work is consecrated by daily and constant prayer, for all day long that poor girl is singing hymns or praying to the Sacred Heart, and to the Blessed Virgin, whilst she is scrubbing, and wringing and ironing and folding, you can imagine what a perfect life it is!"

"But she's paid well for all this?" queried Annie.

"H'm," he said, grimly, "there's the commercial spirit of America again. The great god, Mammon, sole ruler and final end of all mankind."

"No! I didn't mean that," she said, somewhat nettled. "But I can't imagine her giving her time and labour without being well paid!"

"Well, and what do you think she charges now, say for that collar and cuff?"

"I should say three or fourpence each at least."

"One half-penny!" he replied, "and she is very glad when she can get it."

Here Nancy came downstairs, and announced that her spiritual grottoes and shrines were now fit for inspection. They mounted the narrow stairs, and entered a small bedroom with a coped ceiling, and Annie had to put her hands over her eyes to shade them from the blaze of light that now shone around statue and picture, and every holy emblem and insignia of the great Unseen, that revealed itself by faith every hour of the day to this humble and pious girl. The old man knelt down humbly, great theologian and powerful disquisitionist as he was on all the arcana which it pleases the Eternal Mind to

keep veiled from the eyes of Humanity. Here, in the presence of Divine Faith so keen that it had become daily vision, all these terrible abstract questions about the secrets of Godhead, or the intervention of the Deity with human beings, seemed to fade away, as morning mists before the face of the rising sun; and he saw the stately landscape of Faith, each article clearly outlined and defined, by the light of those wax tapers purchased by the sweat and toil of that humble woman.

Refreshed in spirit, and strengthened in faith, he rose up, and after a few murmurs of admiration for the beautiful things they had seen, they descended the stairs again into the workroom; and, when Annie had praised and duly honoured the dainty workmanship of the tub and mangle, they passed out into the sweet air of Heaven again.

They had gone down the road towards home a good distance, and the westering sun was casting his dying radiance across the winter landscape, and western windows were gleaming in the yellow splendour, and the tree tops were pale with colour, when, noticing the silence of his niece, her uncle said:

“Why, Annie, what’s this — crying?”

She wiped her eyes, and said with a little sob:

“It’s the holy Ireland of which I so often heard my mother speak!”

CHAPTER XVIII

REJECTED BY THE "POWERS"

THE same interview that had plunged his pastor into a reverie of passion and piety drove Henry Liston down into the depths of despondency. The bitter words which he had heard about his favourite pursuits and studies affected him not by reason of their sarcasm, but by the suspicion they created in his young mind that perhaps, after all, he had conceived wrong notions of the purposes of education, and of his own vocation amongst the people. Was this old man, of whom his predecessor had spoken with such singular reverence, and who bore the reputation of being the ablest theologian in the diocese — was he right? That is, was his idea of a priestly education the proper one; and should he himself be obliged to retrace his steps, and reconsider, in these the dawning days of his life, his estimate of what the circumstances of the age demanded from the members of the sacred profession? Regarding the scholastic philosophy, and the theology founded upon it as the citadel and bulwark of the Truth and Safety of the Ark of God upon earth, he had always thought that an acquaintance with art and literature was an indispensable requisite for that liberal education which everyone nowadays was receiving, and which was expected also from the ministers of a faith that always held high on its standard the motto of enlightenment. The whole world was moving onward in a certain track bordered with the flowers of imagination and fancy, and demanding at every step what was beautiful even more than what was exalted and useful. Nowadays, men had little time available, and less intellect capable

of dealing with the tremendous abstractions that underlie the whole of the Church's metaphysic. It wearied of such things; and sought guidance in other ways along the paths which offered least resistance to human thought and endeavour. Is it wise to leave these worldlings to pursue their own way without a guide? And how can one offer himself as a guide, unless he has walked that way alone? Forth from primary, secondary, and higher schools, were coming, day by day, hundreds of gifted youths, who had been taught that the masters of all human mental endeavour were the poets, scientists, novelists, metaphysicians of the world. These golden youth have never heard of Suarez or Vasquez; had dimly heard of the "dumb ox of Sicily," whose bellowings were to fill the whole world. They had the world's shibboleths on their lips; the world's idols were theirs. They would regard, apart from his spiritual ministrations, such a gifted man as his pastor, as "a horned owl, sitting in the ivied recesses of some mediæval ruin, and blinking at the sunlight." They will only follow an educated man in these days. And to be regarded as an educated man, clearly one must needs follow that curriculum of studies that is prescribed in the great University of the world, where everyone, priest as well as layman, has to graduate. And is not this universally admitted? Whilst the "great theologians" as a class, holding themselves aloft and aloof from the affairs of men, had little practical influence on the age, except so far as they mould the thoughts and principles of the working apostles in the Church, one hears everywhere of priestly architects, priestly writers, priestly historians, priests in social science, priests in educational controversies, priests in politics, priests even in the marts of commerce; and, so far as we can see, their influence seems to be a paramount factor in every department of modern progress in which they, unwillingly perhaps, but yet by common suffrage, take the lead. "The Penny Catechism," indeed! It is very good; but the advancing and progressive spirit of the age requires more. For while

envious politicians cry, "Back to the sanctuary!" the voice of humanity seems to say, "Come out into the forum and the mart! Come down from your high place in the empyrean, and be a brother to your brethren!"

It was all as clear as noonday to the perturbed brain of the young priest, as he sat, his head buried in his hands in a reverie of troubled thought after his pastor's visit. It was all clear as noonday; and yet he had to admit that that *Heidenröslein* of Goethe on which he had unfortunately stumbled was slightly absurd; and that there was something not quite reverent in that rhapsody of Richter's, although his conclusions told directly in favour of that doctrine of immortality to which the human mind, amidst all its aberrations, seems almost despairingly to cling.

In such a mood of mind, a little thing turns over the balance of thought; and it came in the shape of a few words spoken lightly by his little servant. She said to him with that tone of easy familiarity that seems almost disrespectful, but is not intended to be so:

"Is he going to send another painter here, your reverence?"

"Yes!" said her master, "you may expect him tomorrow!"

"I hope he'll plaze him," she said, going round and setting many things to rights that were not very much astray; "and 'tis mighty hard to plaze him, if all we hears is throe."

"I'd advise you, Kate," said her master, "to be careful about what you hear and more careful about what you say in this place. You'll always find more lies than truth floating around!"

"They won't bear much from me," she said; "but what everybody says must be throe. He's a hard man; and we've seen it ourselves."

"Now, now, now!" said her master, interrupting, "that won't do, Kate. I know the parish priest to be a most benevolent and kindly man, doing good to everybody in his parish."

"Faix, it wasn't much good he was doing when he evicted thim poor Duggans over on the hill; and sint away the poor schoolmaster in the village with his wife and children, and thrun them on the road."

"Where did you hear that nonsense?" said Henry Liston angrily. "There's not a word of truth in what you're saying; and beware! Let me hear no more of it!"

"All right, your reverence!" she said, somewhat abashed. "Of course I don't know but what everybody is saying. There's not wan in the whole parish has a kind word to say for him. 'Tis all law! law! law! Whin he wants to drive a poor girl away to America, '*'tis the law!* When he wants to come down upon a poor schoolmaster, '*'tis the law* agin! But, faith, the people now are taking the law into their own hands, an' they'll teach him a sore lesson. They're sorry for you, your reverence, an' they say they'll make it up to you. But I'm sorry we ever came here, under such a masther as him!"

It was a disturbing element; and yet it had a soothing effect on the irritated nerves of Henry Liston. It was quite clear that the pastor's ways were not approved of by the people; and somehow, we all grow into the absurd belief that *Vox populi est vox Dei!* May it not be, that, as he was erring sadly in his administration, he might also be erring sadly in his dogmatic opinions about a priest's tastes and studies? Was he not, in a word, an *extremist*; and is not that epithet sufficient to condemn him, and to prove his lack of judgment in everything?

He rose up, and went over and examined his beloved books. For a young man he had put together a goodly number of them. There they shone, in all their new and resplendent bindings, row after row, the masterpieces of every age and race of mankind. Was he going to take these out, and destroy them in one sacrilegious holocaust? And then fall back, for the resources that every priest needs against the necessary solitude of his life and

calling, on the "Penny Catechism"? The last word that was said to him by his confessor when leaving college was to have some "hobby," some "fad," which would save him from the ennui of lonely hours. And, now that he had acquired a taste for literature, and had already experienced its value even as an anodyne against the pain of the gristless mill of the brain, was he going to throw himself back on the vacuity of idle hours, and the torture of solitary thought?

He made up his mind, then and there, that this was one of those occasions where a man must lean upon himself, and set aside both tradition and authority.

He looked out; and, seeing that the afternoon was fine, he took up a heavy walking-stick, and started for a long walk. His way led down by the sea-marshes, where he startled into a lazy flight one or two lonely herons or gulls that were fishing amongst the sedges, and then he mounted the steep declivity that led to the cliff that overhung the sea. In a few moments he had rounded the corner, and struck into a narrow path that was beaten by the feet of men across the brow of the fields that sloped down to the shore; and in an instant the whole superb scene, yellow in the wintry radiance, broke into view. He saw how the shore bent in and out in deep bays for miles, sometimes receding far inland, sometimes projecting in bold promontories, that pushed their feet into the sea. Far away, far, far away, the coast-guard station glittered white and beautiful, its masts faintly discernible in the evening light; and very much nearer, a gray tower or castle stood darkly against the blue, or rather slate-coloured, waters, that lay in the calmness of the quiet afternoon, as still as the waters of an inland lake. He stood for a moment, drinking in all the beauty of the scene; and whispering to himself silently that whatever trials or distractions awaited him behind in those fenny and marshy places, at least he had a place of refuge and solitude here above the eternal sea.

"If ever," he said aloud, "I am fretted or annoyed

by — by — circumstances, I'll just bring out some pocket-edition of my poets; bury myself down there in some nook, where only the eye of God can see me; and bid worry and trouble, good-bye!"

He moved along briskly under the exhilaration of the pure sea air and the beauty of the landscape, when, suddenly turning a corner, where the sea had torn down vast masses of cliff and surface, and deeply cut into the land, he came almost face to face with a young girl, who was sitting on a ditch, her limbs crouched and gathered in, and her head resting on her hands. She was by no means a beautiful picture, nor one that would arrest the steps of a hasty wayfarer. Her face, dark of complexion, seemed also begrimed with dirt, and her long, lank hair fell down on either side in that manner we are accustomed to in the pictures of the Prairie Indians. She neither moved, nor spoke, as the young priest came close to where she sat; and in his usual cheery way he said:

"Hello! and who are you?"

She stared him straight between the eyes, and said, without changing her posture, or moving a muscle:

"Hallo! and who are *you*?"

He then took her to be one of those simpletons that formerly were an unpleasant sight in the streets and thoroughfares of Ireland, but who are now mostly gathered into the workhouses; and with some compassion, he said:

"Never mind, my good girl; but what's your name?"

"Never mind, my good boy; but what's *your* name?" she replied.

He laughed at the absurdity of the thing; but she stirred not, but kept her black eyes fixed full upon him, searching him all over.

"You cannot be a Catholic, my good girl," he said at length, putting on an aspect of seriousness, "or you wouldn't speak that way to a priest."

"So you're the new priest that has come here," she said, nodding her head in a significant manner. "Let me tell your fortune and your future."

"Oh! I see," he cried, as a light broke in upon him, "you're one of the gang of gypsies down at the old castle. Thank you, my future and fortune will reveal themselves."

He was moving away, when she arrested him with a gesture. He stood still, and waited, but with a little disgust. The pity that was springing in his heart for a poor simpleton had given way to a strong feeling of aversion for an impostor.

"You wouldn't be in such a hurry if you knew all," she said, in a manner that suggested profound indifference on her part, although she now stood up, descended lightly from the ditch, and confronted the priest. "There are many crosses in your path here. There are those watching you, who will hurt you if they can. And there will be treacherous friends, who will go into your mouth to pick out your secrets, and get you into their power."

"Tell me something new," said Henry Liston, "and not that foolish drivel. What you have foretold of me is true of every man. My books have confided so much to me without the aid of a fortune-teller."

"Give me a shilling," she said, "and I'll tell the truth."

"Then you have been telling lies," he cried. "No, I'll give you nothing. You are a cheat and a liar."

The girl's eyes flashed fire on the instant, and she clenched her hand as if to strike him. But in an instant, a soft film, as of a tear, seemed to steal over her eyes, and she said in a piteous manner:

"You are right. But I'm not lying when I tell you, that I'm hungry. I haven't broken fast to-day."

Touched with compassion, he fumbled in his pockets, and drawing out some silver, he proffered a shilling. She seized the coin, and his hand at the same time, and bending down her face until it almost touched the palm, she examined minutely every line and wrinkle and muscle.

Then raising herself erect, she flung the hand of the priest aside with a contemptuous gesture, and said:

"Pah! There's nothing there! The Powers are not concerned with such as you!"

And she strode down across the fields to where the old pirate-keep and stronghold held watch and ward above the sea.

CHAPTER XIX

A LUCULLAN BANQUET

SEVERAL evenings of those strange tuitions in the pastor's house had passed by, and the invitation to Rohira had been repeated again and again by the young Wycherlys, before Annie ventured to open the subject to her uncle. He used occasionally break away from his Suarez to look in, and give directions to the studies both of his niece and her two companions, arranging lessons, criticising compositions, giving occasional readings in Virgil and Horace to stimulate their energies. Then he would go back to his desk, and recommence somewhere far down in the long columns of proofs and explanations with which the great Spanish Jesuit sought to bring into harmony those terrific forces with which the world of nature and the world of men are agitated. Sometimes, indeed, he brought back sad distractions from these visits, sad misgivings as to the propriety of having these young Protestant lads under his roof at all; and still more poignant doubts of the prudence of allowing his niece to accompany them in their lessons. He had often a secret hope, as the days went on, and the evenings lengthened out, and the year was stretching itself to broader horizons and more cheerful conditions, that they would suddenly leave on some pretext; or that something would turn up to create a diversion that would break up these evening classes. But, no! The days went on; and, regular as clockwork, the young lads came in the evening, conned over their Latin and Greek lessons, were always polite and respectful, and always went away cheerful and thankful. There seemed to be no prospect of ending

an undertaking rashly assumed; and the old priest felt, for the hundredth time in his life, how difficult it is to control a set of circumstances let loose by a single act.

Hence, when his niece first broached to him the proposal to visit Rohira, he rather bluntly and somewhat angrily refused. The young girl resented the tone he took; and showed her resentment as only young ladies, with a certain spirit, can. And seeing that he was bringing into his hitherto quiet home the spirit of unrest, he relaxed so far as to explain:

"You know, my dear Annie," he said, "that this is a matter in which we cannot be too particular. It is not usual in Ireland for Catholics and Protestants to mix together socially, except in very high grades, where education is such a protection. And then, I have to consult the prejudices of the people."

"In America," she said, "we're above such little things. Seems to me, that you here in Ireland are going to keep up the Kilkenny-cats programme to the end."

Which was rather spirited language toward such a giant as her uncle.

"There may be reasons," he said, rather humbly, she thought. "We are just passing out into new conditions, where, perhaps, a better feeling should prevail."

"It seems to me altogether narrow and queer," she replied. "Why, the dearest friends, and the *best* and *truest* friends we had in Chicago were Protestants. I heard father say, more than once, that he would trust Lawyer Plimsoll, a Baptist lawyer, with his life and all he possessed. And I'm sure I'll never again have a friend like Dora Plimsoll."

"Well," he said, turning the tables a little on his niece, "that may be all quite true; and I know you feel this old place lonely sometimes —"

"Now, Uncle," she said at once. "That's not kind. You know I didn't mean that."

Then, after a pause, she said briskly, although there was a little sob in her voice:

"There, Uncle, let's say no more of it. I'll abandon the idea; and let Dr. Wycherly know."

Which, of course, meant victory for Annie. That magnificent sacrifice of will meant prompt surrender on his part. But no more was said about the matter then.

A few evenings later, and just before Lent commenced, her uncle said one evening:

"The days are lengthening, Annie, and the weather is unusually fine. I have been thinking that there was something in what you said about breaking down those barriers that lie between us and our Protestant friends. Some one must begin somewhere. And after all, the people rather like Dr. Wycherly, and they have excellent reason. Many a child he has saved; and many a mother he has given back to her family from the grasp of death. He's a good man, but eccentric. Perhaps, it would be as well if you visited Rohira."

"But I have declined the invitation, Uncle," she answered. "I cannot well offer to go now."

"No, of course," he said, "unless it is repeated. It is not unlikely that they may ask you again."

And they did. Because, in that occult and yet most delicate manner with which young ladies manage to have their way in this world, Annie contrived to let it be known that somehow her objections had vanished, and that she would compliment Dr. Wycherly now by appearing at Rohira, if the honour were again solicited.

The Lenten season was very near at hand; and Lent was a time when good Catholics were averse from visiting. Would Shrove Tuesday suit? Would Miss O'Farrell come to Rohira on Shrove Tuesday, and eat pancakes with the family, and hunt for the ring in the cake, etc., etc.? Precisely. The very day would meet all her wishes. Then came an awkward invitation elsewhere. Father Liston had now got rid, once and forever, of the tribe of artists; his house was perfect from attic to cellar; it was the "use and custom" to open out the long rubric and ceremonial of life with a modest entertainment; and

would not Dr. William Gray and his niece do him the honour to dine with him on Shrove Tuesday, before putting on the sackcloth and ashes of Lent?

It was awkward, this clashing of pleasant voices calling a young life to that relaxation and amusement which are indispensable. But the slow intellect of the uncle, ponderous and comprehensive enough to deal with gigantic problems in the metaphysic of life, was quite unable to grasp this petty difficulty.

"We cannot refuse Father Liston," he said. "It is his first time, — his great inaugural symposium. He is sure to have asked the brethren. It would look ill that I should be absent. And then, he intends to compliment you, Annie."

Annie's face fell. It would be nice of course to dine with Father Liston, and see all the priests. But Rohira — pancakes — gypsies — old castles! Who could resist that? The position was difficult; but what obstacle will not woman's wit cut through? In some mysterious manner, Father Henry Liston cancelled the engagements for Shrove Tuesday; and issued a new set of invitations for the preceding Monday. And so the double vista shone gaily before the vision of the young girl; and she was happy.

It was a pleasant little party over there under the shade of the sea-cliffs, and facing the sea-marshes at Athboy. There were few invited, because Henry Liston was somewhat fastidious; and the profuse hospitality of larger circles was somewhat repugnant to his tastes. But the little dinner was very choice; the appointments were almost too fine; the silver shone a little too brightly; somehow, everyone, but the amiable host, felt that a little more humility and modesty would have placed them more at ease. Only the two young ladies present, his sister and Annie O'Farrell, were enraptured. They saw things with human eyes, and eyes, too, trained by mysterious Nature to understand and appreciate beauti-

ful things. The stern austerity with which human things are viewed by the priestly eye was not theirs. Young, happy, hopeful, only the fair things of life appealed to them; and their imaginations were not sobered by deep contemplations on the vanity of earthly desires. They wished and hoped and dreamed; and were happy when the dreams came true.

Whether it was the stern, austere manner of the old pastor, which he never laid aside, except when speaking to children or the poor, and which he steeled into utter hardness and silence when dealing with his brethren; or whether there was a general feeling that somehow Henry Liston, in his first domestic experiment, had overshot the mark, there was some chill restraint hanging around that dinner-table; and when Henry Liston, in his sense of amiability and hospitality, opened a bottle of costly wine toward the end of the entertainment, and the pastor, on being offered it, said curtly and contemptuously "*No!*" and "*No!*" was echoed down along the table; and the host had to put aside the opened wine on the sideboard untasted — it needed all the glorious hope and buoyance of youth to keep back the tears from his eyes. But, at last, the torture ended; the two young ladies retired to the drawing-room; and a more healthful atmosphere of cheerfulness and good-feeling spread over the room. Still, the majestic presence, and the short, stern remarks of the pastor, punctuated by sarcasm, that levelled all conversation into its own dreary monologue, soon emptied the dining-room. On one excuse or another, the younger priests departed; and the pastor and curate were left alone. Henry knew he was in for something; and he steeled his nerves to bear it.

"Was this your first clerical dinner in Ireland?" said the old man, after an awkward pause.

"Oh, no," said the curate gaily. "I used to have a few priests down to dinner occasionally at M—."

"You were a chaplain, then, passing rich on eighty or ninety pounds a year!"

"Yes! But these little things really cost nothing worth talking about!"

"Indeed? Just hand me over that bottle on the side-board!"

Henry demurely brought over the offending bottle. The pastor read slowly the label:

TOKAY

SUPERIOR. REFINED.

Vintage 188 —.

"How much might that be worth now? How much a dozen?"

"About eighty-four shillings!" said Henry.

"Four guineas! My God! Enough to feed a labourer's family for a month. Absolutely sinful and criminal extravagance. How much more of that stuff have you — in your pantry — I beg your pardon, — in your wine-cellar?"

"That's the only bottle in the house!" said Henry, with a little air of triumph.

"You said it cost four guineas a dozen?"

"So it did. But I didn't pay it. 'Twas simply a Christmas present from my grocer!"

The good pastor's face fell. It was a magnificent thrust from Henry. But the old man was used to parry and fence with dexterity. He was one of those logicians who cannot be beaten, his mind leaped so lightly, like a skilful picador, to avoid a frontal assault. The brethren said of him that he could prove that black was white, that night was day, that sin was virtue, and virtue sin, with the greatest facility. He was born quite out of date! He was a Greek sophist!

"And do you think," he continued, clearing and fortifying his faculties with a pinch of snuff, "that you were justified before God and man in opening and wasting seven shillings' worth of wine — a labourer's wage for a week?"

"Well, you see, sir," said Henry demurely, "I couldn't refuse that present without offence. My grocer said, when giving it to me: 'This is a splendid wine, Father. I can guarantee its purity and age. Don't open it unless you have distinguished company who can appreciate it. You're going to Athboy. Ah! there's the man who knows what wine is — your future parish priest, Dr. Gray.'"

"Who was that blackguard?" said the pastor furiously, "and what did he know about me?"

"I'm sure I can't tell you, sir!" said Henry meekly. "But he seemed to be very proud of your knowledge. The people really like priests that are educated enough to distinguish the bouquet of fine wines."

"*The bouquet of fine wines!*" cried the pastor in a rage. "My God! Think what we are coming to! '*The bouquet of fine wines!*' Such language from a priest; and such indications of forbidden knowledge. This is worse than

*Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,
Röslein auf der Heiden!"*

He snuffed furiously for a few minutes. Then, Henry, with a little trepidation, pushed over a pretty, engraved wine-glass, and said, not without a spice of mischief:

"'Tis open now, sir, and there's no use in letting it go to waste. Try one glass!"

And he filled the dainty glass to the brim.

The pastor tasted it, and put it down, with a grimace of disgust.

"Some chemist's mixture of quinine and bog-water," he said. "I think you shouldn't play such practical jokes on your guests."

"Why 'tis Tokay, real Tokay!" said Henry Liston. "He assured me it was the very best of wine."

"'Tis like everything else you have," said his pastor. "Books, furniture, pictures — all shams. What's that?"

And he pointed his thumb and forefinger toward an engraving that hung on the wall.

"That's an etching of one of Watts' — Watts, you

know — the great painter, whose works are in the Tate gallery. All his works are allegorical and symbolic."

"They may be," said his pastor grimly. "But they're totally unfit for the walls of a priest's house. What do you call that thing?"

"An epergne! A silver epergne!"

"How do you spell it?"

"E-p-e-r-g-n-e!" spelled his curate.

"Silver! What did it cost?"

"'Tisn't all silver, you know," said Henry. "A good deal of it is glass. It cost about ten pounds!"

"And you, a young chaplain, had the effrontery of spending ten pounds on a gewgaw of that kind?"

"I didn't spend one halfpenny on it!" said his curate.

"'Tis a present from the Women's Confraternity!"

"Another present! You will soon be able to set up as a wine merchant, and picture dealer, and jeweller. Did you ever hear the saying: 'This might have sold for much and given to the poor'?"

"I did," said Henry. "And the man was rebuked who said it."

"Who?" said the pastor in a moment's forgetfulness.

"Ish Kerioth!" said Henry.

"Who?"

"Ish Kerioth — Judas, the traitor!"

"Oh, I forgot, you're right, Iscariot. Where did you get that new-fangled pronunciation?"

"'Tis the Hebrew," said Henry.

"Of course. And you know no more about Hebrew than the sole of my boot! There is *more* sham knowledge. Everything is sham with young men nowadays!"

Tea was announced in the next room, where the two young ladies were in ecstasy over all the pretty things that Father Liston had put together, or rather been presented with. For, of a truth, he had scarcely spent twenty pounds on his household effects; but his friends were well-off, and his zeal and kindness and geniality had been substantially appreciated in the town where

he had lately officiated as chaplain; and there are still left in Ireland a few, of the dear old Irish love and faith, who think nothing too good for a priest. Now and again, too, whilst pastor and curate were talking so grimly in the dining-room, the sounds of a rich-toned piano, struck by one of the girls, came floating in subdued melody across the hall. All around there was an atmosphere of refinement, and education, a hint of progress, a departure from old ideas, that grated harshly on the senses of the old man, accustomed to an ascetic mode of living, and no human pleasure but that which came from intellectual intercourse with the exalted minds of the Church.

He stood up, and gazing down along the table, where silver and glass and ruby lamps and rich flowers and costly fruits cast light and fragrance all around, he nodded his head and said, dropping his words slowly, like corrosive acids on the quivering soul of his curate:

"Now, Father Liston, we're commencing life together. How long we shall be together, I cannot tell. But, I am of opinion that an old man's words, whether he be a superior or not, should have weight with the young. Now, I don't know how far these new ideas have become prevalent among the younger priests, or whether you stand alone. But I must tell you at once, and emphatically, that I gravely, — yes, gravely disapprove of many things I have been witnessing. They may not be sinful, or wrong; but they are unpriestly; and, if you make your meditation every morning, as you ought to do, your conscience should have told you this already. There was first your *order*, yes, *order* to your pastor to paint and paper your house in an outlandish fashion. Here then are books that should not be seen on a priest's shelf — German romance, German nonsense, a poor substitute for the Theology of the Church. If you continue feeding your mind on this rubbish, you will either lose your faith, which, probably, is the greatest misfortune that can befall a man in this world, or you'll become a flippant and foolish creature. In God's name, do what I told

you the other day. Take out, and burn in your stable-yard all that rubbish — prose and poetry; and if you have still a few pounds to spare, buy some good Moral-Theology books and Scripture Commentaries, and read them, read them — ”

“I have a fair selection here, sir!” said Henry, calling his attention to a lower shelf, where to his amazement, but not to his confusion, for he was never confused, the pastor read such names as à Lapide, Bellarmin, Hurter, Franzelin, etc.

“H’m! That’s so far good. But, of course, you never open them. Show me that Hurter!”

Henry handed over the book. The leaves were uncut.

“H’m — I thought so. More sham! Wouldn’t it have been cheaper for you to get a few painted pieces of board, and label them!”

“I haven’t had time to read much yet!” said Henry almost crying.

“No, of course, except:

*Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,
Röslein auf der Heiden!*

There’s always time for that!”

He took an enormous pinch of snuff, and dusted his waistcoat in front with his pocket handkerchief.

“Tea is ready, sir!” said Henry. “It is waiting in the — the — parlour!”

“No! drawing-room!” said his pastor. “You should never say ‘parlour.’ ‘Drawing-room’ is the proper word, and the proper thing for a priest. Now,” he continued, “look at that table to-night! It would have suited a nobleman’s palace. It is utterly and criminally unsuitable to a priest, surrounded by poor people, as all priests are in Ireland. I don’t object,” he said as if he were making a tremendous concession, “to a young priest entertaining his friends in a modest way — in a modest way; but just look at what we have seen to-night! Look at that table!”

“Why, there’s nothing exceptional there!” said Henry,

very much nettled. "Did you expect me to dine my friends on bacon and cabbage?"

"No! I see now you're taking my friendly and gentle admonitions in a bad spirit," said his pastor. "There's another sign of the times! No! I do not expect you to dine your friends in a paltry or mean manner; but there are differences between shabbiness and Lucullan banquets —"

"Uncle!" said Annie, putting in her head. "Miss Liston and I are dying for a cup of tea —"

"Then why don't you take it?" said her uncle brusquely.

"Because we're waiting for you!" she replied. "Come!" And he went.

That evening, brother and sister had a pretty conference about the dinner and their guests.

"Miss O'Farrell was in ecstasies," said Mary Liston, "about your dinner and the table appointments. She said she had never seen anything like it before; and, after all, there was nothing unusual or even strange!"

"Not in civilized society, certainly," said her brother, who was smarting under his pastor's criticisms. "I'm glad Miss O'Farrell had a pleasant evening. Her uncle had a pleasant evening, too."

"I thought he looked gloomy and unhappy," said Mary Liston.

"Not at all," replied her brother. "He enjoyed himself thoroughly, because he made every one around him unhappy. I wonder the little he ate didn't choke him."

"Well, never mind, Henry," she said, "every one else was pleased. Katie is off her head from all the compliments she has received."

"Well, I suppose we must forgive and forget," said her brother buoyantly. "The pastor is one of that large class that must be forgiven everything because they mean well."

"Well, I'm very glad I have known Annie," she said. "She appears to be a sweet and accomplished girl."

"So am I glad," he answered. "That poor girl's life must be a trying one; and she needs a friend."

"She told me she was going to Rohira to-morrow," said his sister, "and she asked me to accompany her."

"To Wycherly's?" said her brother, eyes open in surprise. "Wonders will never cease."

"Do you think I may go, even without an invitation?"

"Certainly. Dr. Wycherly is a good man, and does not stand on ceremony. Well, here goes for a breath of fresh air, while Katie is clearing up the table."

He put on his overcoat, took a strong stick, and bent his steps toward the cliffs. It was a night made lovely by the moon, whose beams, unlike the more glaring sunbeams, which accentuate light and shadow, seemed to shed a uniform lustre of pale silver across sea and land. The air was very mild down there by the sea; and when he turned the corner, where the cliff broke away at right angles, and came suddenly, face to face, with the long sweep of sea to the far horizon, rippling in the moonlight, and the long sweep of coast, where the fields sloped down to the low cliffs that broke the violence of the ocean, he thought he had never seen a lovelier sight. Lights, looking quite red in the moonlight, seemed to burn at Rohira, and far up the coast at the station; and one solitary lamp lit up the dusky and picturesque pile of Dunkerrin Castle, that seemed now almost beneath him. It was a scene that might have shed its placid enchantment on a more perturbed spirit than Henry Liston's; for, with all the buoyancy and spring of youth, his spirit rose up hopeful from the depths of a depression that would have embittered for weeks an older and more inelastic disposition, that had passed through the conflict, and found its wings maimed or broken.

Whilst he moved along rapidly, yet pausing from time to time to permit the beauty of the scene to enter and sanctify his spirit, and whilst he allowed the rapture of the sea beneath the moonlight particularly to intoxicate his senses, he thought he saw in near the shore something

like a spectre gliding over the waters. It was pearly white, unlike the gray-white of a sail; and it was not the shape of any sail he had ever seen, but a woman's form, transparent, as he thought, against the moonlight. He descended rapidly a narrow, beaten path that led down from the heights to the high ditch that guarded the cliffs; and, passing rapidly onward, he soon came quite close to Dunkerrin Castle. The eerie character of the place and the dangerous character of its inhabitants forbade him going further; but he saw clearly beneath him a tiny boat or punt, propelled by no human hands apparently, and in the prow, standing upright, was the spirit-form that he had recognized from the cliffs overhead. Utterly stupefied, and somewhat frightened, he uttered a shrill cry; and just then boat and occupant seemed to vanish from beneath him, and to be swallowed up beneath the rocks on which the old keep was built. He leaned up against the damp face of the ditch in a kind of stupor, from which he was only aroused by a voice at his side:

"Priest Liston, thou hast wassailed and wantoned to-night. Thy veins are inflamed with wine; and thy brain is intoxicated with forbidden music. Dost thou consider that half the poor of thy parish, who have gone supperless to bed to-night, and whose little ones cry vainly for bread, might be fed with the refuse of thy banquet?"

It was Judith. She stood over him, appearing in the mist of moonlight much taller than she really was; but he did not notice this, nor take account of her apparel, which was ragged and grimy enough: he saw only her two black, glowing eyes fixed upon him in anger and contempt; he heard only her bitter and untruthful charges against himself. The injustice of the thing stung him, and he answered back in her own style:

"Thou liest, woman! I have neither wassailed nor wantoned! And there is not in the whole parish a single child gone supperless to bed to-night!"

"What do you know of the parish?" she said. "Have

you entered a single cabin since you came hither, or knelt by a single sick-bed?"

"No!" he said feebly. "I haven't been called. I have never shirked duty; nor refused a call from the sick or suffering!"

"You were too busy about your own castle to heed the cabin," she replied. "Whilst you were feasting, your pampered servants drove the poor and starving from your door."

"Not the deserving poor!" he said. "At least not with my knowledge. They have instructions to break bread to every child of Adam, except the thief and the wastrel!"

"And how are they, or you, to know the thief and the wastrel?" she hissed in anger. "Do you think you can discover hypocrites, because you are a hypocrite yourself?"

"I have had enough of this," he said. "Don't attempt to accost me again, so long as you are in this parish! And it will be a short time enough, if I can help it."

"I defy you," she said. "Your Mass-bell rings but once a week. My God, Ahriman, is always with me!"

He went home in a mood from which even his kind sister could not arouse him. He had some tea in silence, and then he took down some books, and began to read. He only said:

"'Tis a strange, uncanny place, Mary! I don't know what to think of it. They appear to be outside civilization. Did any tramps or beggars call around the place during dinner?"

"I'll ask Kate!" she said.

And Kate was able to inform her that a girl of fourteen or fifteen years or more was prowling around the stables and the house all the evening, trying to peer through the windows, and talking to the servants of the priests who had been at dinner. She once ventured into the kitchen, from which she was summarily ejected, and she cursed them all in *Irish*, Kate said.

"I see; that explains something," Henry said to his sister. "I'll have a quiet read before I go to bed."

And he took down some of his gods from their shelves; and bade them speak to him. An unwise thing for a young man! For he who sups with the Olympians will find it hard to breakfast with *boulevardiers*.

CHAPTER XX

A VISIT AND A PROPHECY

DOWN along that moonlight drive of five or six miles with her uncle, Annie's heart was singing joyously, with the delight of having seen some of those fair and beautiful things in which the spirit of a young girl rejoices, and also in having made a new acquaintance — that of a friend whose tastes and desires (so she had ascertained in their friendly colloquy after dinner) were exactly identical with her own. And, perhaps, the ear of this weary world, so full of sighs, and anguish, and regrets, hears nothing half so sweet as those delightful interchanges of ideas and sentiments that take place between two young girls, whose dissimilarity of age, although not very great, is yet no barrier to the outpouring of confidences, that seems to establish on the moment a treaty of life-long friendship. She was so full of joy and innocent girlish thankfulness that she should speak to the grim old mentor at her side.

"Well, that was the most enjoyable evening I ever yet spent. Wasn't it delightful, Uncle?"

"H'm," said the uncle, holding the reins steady on the old roadster, whose long paces and methodical steps seemed quite in keeping with his master's ways.

"I'm beginning to understand Ireland better now, the dear old Ireland, of which mother used to speak — so genial, so kind, so hospitable!"

"H'm-m-m!"

"And it was all so pretty — the silver, the glass, the dinner-ware, the lovely flowers and grapes. Why didn't you drink that wine, Uncle, that Father Liston opened?"

"Because I wanted to avoid a sudden death," said her uncle.

"Oh, I see," said Annie, unconsciously, "I have heard that these wines are bad for old persons."

"Yes, and for young persons, too," said her uncle, savagely.

"Indeed? I suppose so. But, perhaps, it is the fashion to offer them. I'm not well made up in these things. Miss Liston told me a lot!"

"H'm-m-m!"

"She's a most delightful girl — except Dora Plimsoll, whom I shall never forget, she's the most attractive girl I ever knew."

"Like her brother?" said the old man.

"Yes, indeed," said Annie, "she really resembles him a good deal. And she adores him. She thinks there's no one in the world like Henry, as she calls him."

"I agree with her there," said her uncle. "He is quite exceptional in every way."

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear you say so, Uncle," she said. "Won't Mary be pleased to hear that! She was saying how anxious her mother was that you and he could get on together. Did you know her mother, Uncle? She said, I think, that she knew you at one time."

"I did, well," he replied. "A good, simple, honest Christian woman, with no nonsense about her, none of these fandangoes that are becoming fashionable nowadays!"

"But did you know Mary? No, I suppose she's too young!"

"I baptized her!" said her uncle, and then he was silent. The little remembrance softened him a good deal.

For a few miles they drove along in silence, till very near home, when Annie said:

"Do you know, Uncle, I have done a rash thing; but I hope it is all right!"

"I'm not surprised," said her uncle grimly. "Well, what is it?"

"I took the liberty of asking Mary Liston to go with me to Rohira to-morrow. Of course, I have had no invitation for her. Will it make any difference, do you think?"

"It might elsewhere," he replied, "but Dr. Wycherly is a sensible man; and doesn't mind nonsense of that kind."

"She'll come down here, and we can go together to Rohira. You'll give us the covered car, won't you?"

"By all means," he said, more cheerfully. "Tell Bob, and he'll be ready."

In fact this arrangement solved one of these new troubles that seemed to rise, like bubbles, out of the quiet waters of life. He had great misgivings about those evening tuitions of his niece; and, after he had given a hasty consent to her visiting Rohira, the grave indelicacy of the situation seemed to strike him. But he had no choice. He could not damp the spirits of this young and joyous being by withdrawing the permission on the ground that the visit was unusual or irregular, and he dared not hint at possible complications that might arise. He had to bow his head to destiny, and destiny came again to his aid.

And so, the following afternoon, a bright breezy spring day, with warmth in the air, fragrance and beauty bursting from the earth, and great fleecy clouds chasing one another across the blue fields of heaven, the two young girls, in the happy springtime of life, drove up along the sloping road that led to the high grounds above the sea. It was so warm that they gladly dispensed with their furs, and Annie said:

"I'm sorry now we didn't bring the side-car. Do you know, Mary, I don't like these covered cars. They shut out the view and they are so close and stuffy."

"Yes, my dear," said the more experienced Mary, "but when we are coming home, and there is no landscape, and Jack Frost is nipping our faces, it will be no harm to have a little shelter. Who lives there? It is a nice situation."

"I believe one of my countrymen — a returned Yank, like myself," said Annie. "I believe that place has been some trouble to my uncle."

"And look," said Mary, "what horrid-looking fellows!"

These were the emergency-men, who, after the day's work, were lazily leaning over the ditch, smoking their short pipes, and making savage remarks on things in general.

"Do you know, Annie," said her friend, "I am afraid there are some horrid people here. There was some young girl prowling around our kitchen last night; and at last Jem had to put her out; and she used dreadful language. And now, look at these. I shall be afraid to come back this way, when it is night."

"There's no danger," said the courageous Annie. "That's where Kerins lives; and these are workmen sent out by some gentlemen, for no one here would work for him. There's something against him. I don't understand it. But, you see," she continued, airing her superior wisdom, "these men are for the law. They're a kind of police, and therefore we're safe from them."

"Oh, that's all right," said Mary Liston, feeling much more comfortable for the explanation. "If they are a kind of police, we could call on them to protect us."

"Of course," said Annie. "Let me fix your veil; it's drooping a little."

By and by, they came to the gate that led down a winding avenue from the upper road to Rohira; and, as they turned into the broader sweep that led to the door, both girls gave an involuntary cry of surprise at the beauty of the scene that lay before them. Dunkerrin Castle, a little to the right, seemed to lie right beneath them, for the slope of the fields was precipitous; and they had not yet time to measure distances, nor see things in perspective. For the same reason, the vast expanse of ocean, instead of appearing, as it would appear to trained and accustomed senses, a great level of tranquil and gleaming waters, now seemed to rise up before them as

a gray and gleaming wall of crystal, mounting high over their heads, and impenetrable as the wall of a prison. And the coast-line, dark and well-defined in the waning light of a March evening, had every rock and pinnacle, every bay and headland, defined as if an artist had drawn deep, dark boundary lines across them, and defined them as a map, and not as a picture. The girls stopped the car, and dismounted, walking slowly along the well-gravelled walk that led to the front of the mansion, and pausing, now and again, little poets as they were, to drink in the beauty that lay so solemn on earth and sky and sea.

Dr. Wycherly came forth to meet them, having heard the sound of the carriage wheels on the gravel. With old-fashioned courtesy, he had put aside his velvet jacket, and now appeared in a close-fitting coat, such as professional men wear in cities. His long hair curled down upon his shoulders; his beard was neatly trimmed; and he saluted and welcomed his girl-visitors with all the deference he would have paid to the first lady in the land. He manifested not the slightest surprise in seeing two visitors, where only one was expected. He simply murmured interrogatively:

"Miss — ?" bowing to Annie.

"Miss O'Farrell," said Annie, with equal simplicity. "And I have taken the liberty of bringing my friend, Miss Liston, to see Rohira. Uncle said you wouldn't mind!"

"Your good uncle," he said, "compliments me, by speaking the truth. I am greatly pleased that you both have honoured me with your presence. The boys, whom you know better, are not yet returned from school. But I shall show you all my curios, to interest you, till they return."

He took them into the great hall, which spread aloft, heavy with stucco, wrought in cornice and ceiling into all kinds of fancy fruits and flowers and figures. The walls were literally covered with all kinds of Hindu arms

and ornaments — beadwork, entangled in all kinds of fancy devices; heavy lacquered ware, with strange Hindu emblems; costly Benares vases suspended on moulded brackets; and an armoury of guns and pistols, and sabres crooked and vicious-looking, and Paythan knives with their heavy ivory handles. On the tables of delicately-wrought or engraved brass were valuable sets of chessmen, made from the purest ivory; and work-boxes and writing-desks, from which the faint aroma of rare and precious woods exhaled. On every blank space, the hideous scaled skin of some dangerous species of reptile stretched its dried folds, the ugly triangular head with its naked fangs glaring down, as if in life, upon the visitors. The girls shuddered, and drew together; and Dr. Wycherly, noticing the gesture, conducted them, beneath the rare and costly tapestry that half-covered an entrance, into his drawing-room.

Here again he excited their surprise and curiosity by showing and explaining in detail many a wonderful book, or picture, or article of virtu he had picked up in his travels; and then, when their curiosity was sated, he bade them sit on a carved oak sofa, until he would discover and exhibit the prize of his collection.

This he took with some precaution and not a little reverence from the cabinet near the window; and beckoning the young ladies forward until the long light of the westering sun fell full upon it, he opened the box, and with some tenderness and awe, bade them inspect it. They could see nothing but a little golden dust, a strand or two of fine hair, and some broken paper; and they looked at him for an explanation.

"You see there, my dear ladies," he said, "the relics, the precious relics of my dear, dead wife. This is her hair, crumbled away into a kind of golden dust under the alchemy of Death and Time; for Death is not the great Destroyer. He needs Time, as an apprentice, to perfect his work. This is the remnant of her farewell letter to me: alas! it was illegible, or rather so fragile that it per-

ished in my hands. They both came to me in a singular manner. I knew that the spirit of my dear, dead wife haunted the old castle down there on the cliffs. She loved the sea and that old keep in life. She used to spend her days there, watching the sea from one window, which I shall show you. Her spirit haunts the old ruin still. She is often seen there on fine, moonlight nights, like this. Don't start, my dear young ladies! The spirits of our beloved dead cannot hurt us. Do you think that those who loved us in life, come back to harm us in death? No! Impossible! Well, I used to go down there often, very often in past days, seeking for one, at least one, interview with her, who was so dear to me during life. But I failed. She has revealed, and does reveal herself to others. She has not chosen to reveal herself to me. But, somehow, I felt that there was some message from the dead awaiting me somewhere: and one day I discovered a heavy oaken door, that seemed so solid as to be part of the masonry, and I pushed it to. It revealed a long narrow passage, at the end of which was a sunken chamber; and in that chamber I discovered these, the last sad remnants of my beloved. I brought them home with infinite care; but the moment the air caught them, it dissolved them. This is all that remains; but I assure you, my dear young ladies, I would willingly part with every object in my Oriental collection in the hall, rather than with this little box. But here are the boys! I know their footsteps. They will be greatly pleased!"

And folding up the sacred dust and carefully tying the box, he laid it away in the cabinet, which he locked.

The boys rushed into the hall, rough and boisterous enough, so greatly in contrast with the quiet, sad demeanour of their father, Dion shouting:

"I say, Pap, did Miss O'Farrell come? Ah, here you are! I was afraid you'd disappoint us!"

And then he looked shyly at the stranger.

"Miss Liston, Dion!" said Annie O'Farrell.

"Miss Liston, Jack!" she repeated; and the two lads shook hands with some reserve toward the stranger.

"Now, before the twilight falls," said the father, "you had better take the ladies down and see the old castle —"

"But I want some grub, Pap!" said Dion, with a grin. "I'm as peckish as a starved crow!"

"I'm surprised at such language before ladies," said his father. "Why, Miss O'Farrell, I can hardly congratulate you on your pupil."

"The words don't come into our Latin lessons," said Annie, with a smile. "Perhaps they belong to some other language?"

"They do!" said Dr. Wycherly, with some severity. "They belong to the language of slang, which young gentlemen should never use before ladies. Now, Dion, curb your appetite, until you have done the honours of the place to your visitors. I promise you a hearty tea, and plenty of pancakes at six o'clock!"

"Hurrah! good old Pap!" shouted Dion. "Come, Miss O'Farrell, come Miss Liston; and we'll see the old castle first."

"Are you afraid?" whispered Mary Liston. "I am. I wish we were back for the pancakes."

They had little to fear, however, for never were fair ladies escorted by such gallant cavaliers. Dion, although hungry, was in boisterous spirits. Jack, more gentle, and more reserved, seemed rather more solicitous about the young ladies' dresses, as they toiled down the rough path, strewn with brambles, but starred with yellow primroses, that led to the castle. Here they paused; and, without entering the premises of the gypsy family, they mounted a rude stone staircase, that led to the second story of the building. From this a fine view was had of the sea in front, that seemed to stretch illimitably forward to the southern horizon; and to the west, where the coast was broken by all the jagged lines of cape and promontory.

"Beneath here," said Dion, "is a cave, or rather be-

neath the gypsy room; and you can hear the sea bellowing and groping beneath the castle. And here is the narrow bight or fiord that cuts its way far into the land. Yonder is the Coast Guard Station; and I guess that many a glass is levelled at this old pile. But mum's the word!"

They went higher to the last story, which was unroofed, and open to the heavens, although the walls and windows were intact. And, as they stood in pairs, gazing at the wondrous scene that lay before them, Jack Wycherly whispered to Annie:

"You won't be alarmed, Miss O'Farrell, if I tell you that this is the window where the reputed ghost is seen? We have no faith in it, Dion and I. We have our own suspicions. But, poor Papa believes that it is our dear mother's spirit that comes back to visit a place that was dear to her. We don't care to contradict him. It would anger him. But, we think it is all a fraud. And oh! it is so horrible to think that our dear mother's memory should be used in so shocking a manner!"

And there were tears in the boy's eyes, as he spoke; and Annie, turning toward him in the waning twilight, noticed the pinkish pallor of his face, and the glitter in too luminous eyes. Fearing to ask what he and his brother suspected, she thought to relieve his feelings by asking of what his mother had died.

"Of consumption!" he said. "Pulmonary phthisis is what father called it. She caught cold, neglected it, and it developed into that disease. But it is very chill here, Miss O'Farrell. Let us go down!"

As they stepped from the last stone on to the gravel, they were met by the tall form and dark face of Judith. She was by no means an ill-looking woman; but there was always a sinister look on her face, that was furrowed, as we have said.

"Let me tell your fortune, young lady!" she said, holding out her hand.

Dion, who had gone up the hill with Miss Liston, shouted down:

"Get away from that old hag, Miss O'Farrell. Jack, what are you doing?"

But the woman clutched the girl's arm, who shrank from her in terror; and Jack Wycherly, seeing her anguish, struck smartly the hand of the old witch.

She turned on him angrily; and, then, assuming her usual prophetic look, she pointed upward to the castle, and said:

"The spirit of your mother calleth for you — to go to her, and in the same way."

They passed from her in silence, oppressed by her manner and her words. When they entered Rohira, there was a tumult of voices. The eldest brother, and heir to Rohira, had unexpectedly come back from sea.

CHAPTER XXI

COMMENTS AND CONFIDENCES

ON their way home from Rohira, the two young girls did not well know whether they ought to be pleased, or disappointed with their visit. The weird beauty of the place, especially in the setting sun and in the after-twilight and in the moonlight, seemed to haunt them with its melancholy splendour. The strange, sad figure of the old doctor, so sane, so refined, so highly trained, so fascinating, were it not for that one dark line of the monomania that possessed him, almost moved them to tears. And the rencontre with that wretched old woman at the castle, her assumed majesty of mien and carriage, her prophetic words, her dark visage, seamed with lines of passion, would have made Annie shudder, but that the unpleasant recollection seemed to have been obliterated by one still more unpleasant — that of the sudden and unexpected advent of the elder member of the family, whose presence apparently was not too well desired.

"It spoiled the evening on us," said Annie O'Farrell, with a shrug. "Why didn't he come yesterday, or the day before, or to-morrow, or the day after to-morrow? One would suppose that he was told we were coming; and that he arrived just in time to spoil our amusement."

"What is it, I wonder? What brought him home?" said Mary Liston.

"I don't know," said Annie. "But from what the boys hinted, from time to time, I suspect he has failed in his examination for the captaincy of a vessel, and has given up the sea."

"Well, but after all," said her friend, "that could

hardly be reason enough for the rather cold reception he got, especially from Dr. Wycherly. You noticed that the kind old man was struck silent for the whole evening."

"Yes," said Annie, inconsequently, "and the pancakes were lovely."

"So they were," said Mary Liston. "And weren't the silver and ware superb? They'd drive Henry wild with jealousy."

"But did you notice that there was a want of tidiness somewhere? I suppose we shouldn't make remarks; but I think I see a woman's hand was wanting."

"He's very handsome?" said Mary Liston.

"Who?"

"The prodigal son. I suppose he's tanned and browned from the sea. But he's decidedly a handsome man."

"Something sinister, though?"

"Well, n—no! There's not the space of the eye between the eyes, which is the sign of perfection; but, otherwise, he is a type of manly beauty."

"Oh! but we forgot. We never saw the acres of violets and lilies-of-the-valley and hyacinths—the very things we came to see!"

"I can't bear hyacinths. The perfume overpowers me."

"I love the daffodil and the narcissus for themselves; and because they cause no trouble."

"Did the old witch tell your fortune? We saw her catching your sleeve; and that young lad trying to disengage your hand."

"No!" said Annie, with a faint blush, happily unseen in the dark. "But she 'assumed the god,' and prophesied for poor Jack."

"Poor? why do you say 'poor,' Annie?"

"Because, you know, the young lad looks delicate; and — and — that old beast said the spirit of his mother was beckoning unto him."

"She meant calling him away?"

"Yes!" said Annie, with something like a sob. "Of

course, we are taught not to believe such things; and I suppose there is a good deal of trickery and deceit about these people. But somehow it oppresses you, doesn't it?"

"I'm afraid it does," said her friend. "I suppose 'tisn't right; but a dream will haunt me for days."

"I'm awfully sorry we didn't see the garden! It will mean another invitation, and another visit," said Annie.

"But won't that be delightful?" said her companion.

"Delightful? No. I shan't like it. Do you know, I fear that I shall not sleep to-night. The whole thing has given me a shudder. Did you ever get that creepy feeling, when someone is telling a ghost-story?"

"Often!" said Mary Liston. "It gets under the roots of your hair; and you almost feel them move!"

"Yes! that's just what I feel about Rohira," and Annie gave a little shudder, and drew her furs closer around her neck.

"Do you know what I think, Annie," said her friend after a long pause. "I think still that what seemed wanting here was a woman's hand. The ware was so lovely — antique — I'm sure it was valuable. And the silver — those sugar-bowls and cream-ewers were solid silver, not electro-plate — I saw the hall-mark — and did you notice how heavy and massive they were? And the spoons! All solid silver. I suppose he stole them from some Hindu prince —"

"Sh!" whispered Annie. "The doctor is a good man."

"I know," said Mary Liston. "But it is surprising what good people will do under temptation. And out there, you know, I heard Henry reading something about it, the West India, or East India Company, or Society or something, thought it only right to take away everything the natives possessed. That's what makes England so rich at the present day."

"How horrible!" said Annie O'Farrell. "But you may be sure the poor doctor did nothing wrong. He is so kind to the poor, I hear uncle say, and so charitable."

"Perhaps he is making up for all the bad things he did abroad?"

"You are a regular little infidel, Mary Liston!" said Annie. "But here we are? Can't you stay the night — uncle will be so pleased."

"No! I promised Henry I would return, and he would be uneasy," said Mary. "But, Annie, if the second invitation shall come, and it will, because I know you must see those gardens, promise me that I shall go, too."

"I take that for granted," said Annie. "And this time, I'll secure an invitation for you. Come in and see uncle, until your car is ready."

Such were the comments made by two innocent school-girls on their little adventure that evening. Somewhat different in tone and temper were the remarks on the same visit that were made elsewhere the following day.

The Duggans were very sore and bitter since the day when their home and honour were both alike outraged by the visit of the police. The charge of petty theft was intolerable to the imagination of a highly-strung people, who thought little of a hard word or a blow, or any other act of violence. And, as usual, in their own illogical fashion, they raged against the very man who was defending them against the vile imputation. In these remote and thinly-populated places reports travel fast, and very simple incidents are noticed and recorded. And hence, the evening of Ash-Wednesday had not closed in, when news reached these people that Mr. Reeves, chief agent and organizer of the Defence Union, had been closeted with their parish priest during an entire afternoon.

"I knew it," said Dick Duggan, angrily, this evening. "He has gone over, body and bones, to the inimies of our race and religion."

"Who has gone over to the inimies of our race and religion?" said his mother, with equal anger, facing him

with that fierce scowl under which the bravest of her children winced and quailed.

"The priesht! The parish priesht!" replied Dick. "There's the evidence 'ud convict him in anny coort in Ireland. When he brings Reeves all the way from his home to see him, do you think 'tis for nothin'?"

"And who told you, you blagard," said his mother, "that it was the priesht brought him, instid of him calling on the priesht?"

"Him callin' on the priesht?" echoed Dick, with derision. "He'd call on the divil sooner, an' you know that. Did any wan ever before hear of a landlord callin' on a priesht, without being axed?"

"And what 'ud the priesht want wid him?" asked the mother, lowering her tone from one of fierce denial to one of anxiety.

"What 'ud he want, but to set him on us? Sure 'tis plain as two and two makes four. He sinds for Reeves; he tells him all about us; and Reeves sends for the police. Sure annywan wid an eye in his head can see that."

"There's no use argyfyin' the matter, mother," said her daughter, breaking in; "they're gone over, body and sowl, to the Prodestans. Sure them two fine ladies that kum to the parish lately were over at Rohira last night till all hours, coortin' and gallivantin' with them boys. Ned, the Captain, has come home; and they had a big party to meet him."

"Wisha, faix thin, Ned is not so welkum a visitor to Rohira, that they'd care to have a party to meet him. Who told you?"

"Thim that seen thim, going and comin'," said her daughter.

It struck the poor old woman dumb. All her defences were shattered. Some deep Catholic instinct told her that there was a mistake somewhere, and that the priest was wronged. But she couldn't see her way out of the difficulty. Reeves calling on the priest, and closeted with him; the subsequent visit of the police on their insulting

errand; and the entertainment of the two young ladies at Rohira — all seemed to her simple mind to point in one direction, namely, to the abandonment of old ways and customs on the part of the priests, and the implied betrayal of their people.

She went around her work this evening in a sad and angry mood. The black "tea" of Ash-Wednesday and the total absence of decent food hardly improved her temper; but she could say nothing. She only prayed to God to enlighten her, and to clear up the mystery for her.

Later on they were gathered round the humble supper-table near the square of glass that served as a window. The men too missed the milk that accompanied the usual supper of potatoes. They had to eat the home-made bread dry, and the potatoes dry except for a little "dip," made of flour and water; and the "black tay" that succeeded, tasted acrid and unwholesome in their mouths.

These things, apparently trifling, do not much improve the Christian temper; and the old man and the "boys" were smoking furiously in the inglenook near the hearth to get back their equanimity, when the sheep-dog, that had been sleeping under the table, roused himself and barked; and the next moment, a tall, handsome figure burst into the kitchen.

"God save all here!" he said, cheerily. "How are you, Duggan? and the mistress? Is this Dick? And Jerry? Why it seems only yesterday, since I left you all behind."

The family was taken by surprise; but they soon recognized Edward Wycherly, the eldest son of the old doctor, and the future heir of Rohira.

"Oh! Master Ned, is that you?" said the master of the house. "We hard you kum home; and sure all the nighbors are glad to see you."

"And I'm glad to see them," said he, taking the chair that was offered him by the young daughter of the house. "When a fellow is knocking around the world in all sorts

of weathers, and meeting all sorts of queer folks, he is glad to get home, and amongst honest people again."

"I suppose you saw many quare things while you wor abroad," said the old man. He alone ventured to speak, the others having sunk into that condition of observant silence which the Irish peasant so much affects.

"'Queer' is no name for them," said the visitor, taking out a silver case, and lighting a cigar. "It would take a month of holidays to tell all. But, how are ye getting on here? What kind of a Shrove had ye?"

"Divil a much!" said the old man. "I didn't hear of a marriage at all at this side. There wor wan or two small ones over at Lackagh."

"I suppose the priests are too hard about the money?" said Wycherly, smiling.

"That's right. Begor, your 'anner has it now," said Dick, with a grin.

"'Tis a lie for you, you blagard," said his mother, angrily. "You know in your heart and sowl that the priests aren't hard on the people. But, faix," she said, turning to Wycherly, "the wurruld won't plaze the young people nowadays. Nothin' but America for the girls; and the bhoys want as much money as would float a ship."

"And the ould people don't want to give it," said Dick Duggan.

"Thim that have it, don't," said his mother. "Sure no bhoy now is married under forty or fifty; and the girls are thirty-five or forty theirselves."

"Then I have no chance," said Wycherly, in such a melancholy fashion that all burst out laughing.

"Begor, yer 'anner," said Dick, with unusual freedom, "we hard you had your chice of two fine young ladies last evening. Sure, you must be hard to be plazed, if the parish priest's niece and the curate's sister wouldn't plaze you."

Wycherly smoked in silence.

"Sure, we hard," said Dick Duggan, continuing his

favourite topic, "that they wor specially axed up to meet yer 'anner."

"Indeed?" said Wycherly, drawing in and closely scrutinizing the speaker. "That can hardly be, as I was not expected home. I landed at Queenstown yesterday, and never sent even a wire that I was coming. But they were both nice-mannered and bright young ladies. The parish should be proud of them."

"They are!" said Dick drily.

"By the way, I see," continued Wycherly after a pause, "you and ourselves have got a new neighbour. How long are the Slatterys gone?"

"Oh, a year or two," replied the father.

"I wonder," said Wycherly, opening out the raw sore that was festering in these poor peasants' minds, "they didn't leave you the place. It would have been a neat little addition to your farm, which is really too small. Or, one of the boys could have taken it, and settled down there, and brought in some girl with a piece of money."

"I suppose 'twasn't God's will," said the mother, anxious to turn the conversation. "There's a man there from America. Kerins they call him."

"Rich?" said Wycherly.

"Rich as a Jew," was the answer. Dick Duggan went out; he couldn't stand this.

"I wish he had gone somewhere else," said Wycherly. "I hear he has Emergency men minding the place. I don't like that. The people could have done without these fellows."

But, notwithstanding his friendly tone and attitude, these remarks were received with silence and suspicion. Nothing will ever again take from the peasant's heart the dread of the gentry.

He saw it, and rose up to go.

"Well, I must be off," he said, throwing the end of the cigar into the fire. "We'll see a deal of one another, I hope."

"Then you're not going away to say agin?" the old man asked.

"No!" he replied. "I have given up the sea. I've come home to stay; and help father to manage Rohira."

"An' you'll be marryin' and getting a rich wife, plaze God!" said the old man.

"I haven't made much headway with the ladies as yet," he said, laughing. "At least our two visitors of last evening seemed to take me for a pirate, who had just hauled down the black flag from his masthead. They ran when I came in, and that's a bad sign, although I'm not such a bad-looking fellow. Am I now?" he said, addressing the young girl.

She turned away her head, and said in a low voice:

"I have seen worse sometimes!"

"There's a compliment, Mrs. Duggan. You see there's no use. I can't get on. But good evening to you all!"

"Banacht lath!" said the old man.

CHAPTER XXII

THE BEAST AND THE MAN

AFTER a whole day's solemn meditation made on an empty stomach, which, according to the Schola Salernitana, and old Cornaro, and other reputable authorities, is the first condition of a clear head, Henry Liston decided in a most pragmatic manner that he was justified in persevering in the manner of life he had now assumed. The solemn abjurations and remonstrances of his pastor had disturbed his conscience not a little, especially as they seemed to be the sharp echo of all he had heard in college. Once or twice, during the long mental struggle on that Ash-Wednesday, he had almost determined to rise up and commence the holy season and a new life by making the holocaust of all these worldly books, which his pastor so warmly recommended. But, when he stood before his bookcase, and saw their beautiful bindings, and remembered the many hours of pleasant and profitable recreation they had afforded him, his heart sank, the tears came into his eyes, and he turned away. He also remembered that once in England, where he had purchased these books, a certain visitor one day, looking over them, exclaimed in a tone of surprise:

"What? Goethe, Novalis, in a priest's house! This is the New Era. So you have found the Secret," and then murmured absently: "Rome will conquer again. She has got our guns at last!"

And finally, he thought what a comparative failure his pastor had been in that parish, even though he was reputed to be, and in reality was, a distinguished and deeply-read theologian.

"I'll try on the new lines," said Henry, late that night "I'll try modern methods. If I fail, I'll fall back on the old lines again."

An excellent resolution; but one not too easily carried out. The great central problem appeared to be, whether it was a fact that a new spirit had come into Ireland; and whether the priesthood were to persevere in the old methods of dealing with their people, or adopt new methods more in accordance with the spirit of the age. Father Henry Liston decided for the latter, regardless of the consequences to himself.

The first indication of his new resolution was his throwing himself, as it were, into the hearts of the people. Whilst his great pastor kept "aloof and aloft," administering his parish in strictest accordance with canon law and tradition, Henry Liston came down to their level, became one of themselves, spoke to them familiarly, cried with their sorrows, and laughed with their joys. His pastor immediately noticed it, and warned him. Going home one morning from the Lenten stations, he read him a homily on the manner in which he had addressed the people that morning.

"It was altogether too familiar," he said. "It is right to be plain and simple; but you mustn't degenerate into a familiarity that makes the people smile at such sacred things. And it is all right to use homely illustrations; but that story of the fox this morning was simply an outrage on all religious decency. Try and maintain some dignity, Father Liston. The people will think more of you in the long run. And, by the way," he continued, "you must give up the habit of addressing people by their Christian names. You have no right to call people with whom you have had so little acquaintance, 'Mary,' or 'Kate.' They don't like it."

The allusion to the "fox" story originated thus. A few days previous to this Station, when the pastor, after having hastily swallowed a cup of tea and a morsel of dry bread, had departed, and the few farmers, who had

been patiently waiting at the kitchen fire, came in to breakfast, the young curate remained, anxious to make their acquaintance. And, under the sunny and welcome absence of the pastor, and the cheerful greetings of the curate, and the prospect of getting a fairly good Lenten breakfast for nothing, the good people relaxed a little, and finally let themselves go.

In a country-house like this, the conversation invariably turns on one of two topics, fox-hunting and politics. The ways of Reynard and the ways of the politician seem to have a peculiar fascination for the Irish peasant; and they take the keenest delight in narrating the tortuous methods of securing an election, even to a country dispensary, on the one hand, or the Machiavellian tricks of the fox on the other. And they laugh at their own losses from either side. This morning, the politicians were left in peace, although it was a sore trial to some to abstain from criticising public men; and the conversation turned on the coolness and dexterity and honesty and fidelity of the fox. For, like most much-maligned persons, that poor animal has certain virtues of its own, which, however, are feebly recognized by an unjust and indiscriminating public.

"There never yet was a more belied poor crachure, yer reverence, than a fox," said a stout young farmer, his mouth well crammed with a junk of home-made bread. "I knew a poor widda wance, that lived near a cover. She had the finest flock of geese and turkeys in the counthry. And, although she was a widda, and the fox knew it, he never tetched as much as a fedder on thim fowl. There they were, crowing and cackling and sailin' over the pond under his nose, and he never even looked at 'em. But one winter came in very cowl'd, and the country was snowed up all round. And the fox got hungry. And agin his conscience, and though he knew, as well as you or me, that he was committing sin, he descinded one cowl'd, awful night on the widda's yard, and tuk away wid 'im wan of her finest hins. She cried *Mille*

murther! whin she diskivered in the morning wan of her best hins gone; and you may be sure she cursed that poor fox as hot as if he wor a Christian. But he didn't mind — not a bit. The weather cleared up a little thin. And wan fine morning, whin the widda kem out to count her chickens, she found she had two too many. 'Yerra who owns thim?' sez she to herself. 'Thim aren't mine.' Just thin she looked up, and there was Mr. Fox going away, jest like a gintleman, without waiting to be thanked. And the quare thing was that it was just the colour and breed of the hin he ate, that he brought back agin!"

"I hard much the same of the ould huntsman that used live over at Longueville," said an ancient and grizzled old farmer. "He had a hole dug near the fire-place, and he made a nate cover for it out of an ould millstone; and whenever the fox was hard pressed he made for that cover; and they never caught him. But he wasn't goin' to be in anny wan's debt. He robbed and stole every hen roost around the country; and begobs the ould huntsman never wanted a fowl in his pot so long as he had such a provider."

"But it wasn't honest," said Henry Liston, who was shocked at such vulpine and human depravity.

"Which, yer reverence — the fox, or the huntsman?" said the historian.

"Of course, the man," said Henry. "The fox is irresponsible — he doesn't know better."

"God help yer reverence," said the farmer. "He knows he's doing wrong, the villain — but sure, he thinks 'tis right to recompense his friend. And sure it is."

"But the man ought to stop such depredations," said Henry.

"How, yer reverence?" was the query. And all looked up to witness the discomfiture of the young priest. That "how" was a poser.

"He's not always as honest as that," said another guest. "He always has an eye on the eleventh commandment; but sure in that he's only like the rest of the

world. 'Meself first, and the rest nowhere,' is his religion; and 'tis the religion of many besides him. I wint in wan fine mornin', it might be four or five years ago, to take a look at the barn to see how things wor goin'. And lo! an' behold you, there wasn't a hin or a turkey alive; and herself had the natest lot of young turkeys for the Christmas market wor ever seen. Me eyes sprod in me head; and I was just beginnin' to curse and blasht the thief, whin there in the middle of thim was himself, as dead as a dure nail. I let fly wan or two soft words at 'im; and thin I wint over and took the vally of the fowls out av him in kicking. After a while I got ashamed of kicking a dead brute, so I caught him by the brush, and flung him out into the dunghill. I wint in thin to call out the dogs; and out they kum, yelpin' and barkin', like mad. But there was no fox!"

"What happened?" said Henry innocently.

"Begor, 'tis aisy to guess what happened," said the narrator. "He was shamming death. He got in through a high winda, I suppose, intindin' to take one fowl for his supper, and no more. But, like ourselves, wan crime led to another, and whin he found he could not get out, there was nothin' fur him but to massacray thim all, an' himself into the bargain."

"He wasn't as cute as the fellow that got into my yard a few months ago," said a rival. "The same thing happened to my boy-o; he got in through a high winda, and couldn't get out. So he killed all before him; and thin he gathered them all ondher the high window where he kem in. We wor huntin' and scourin' the counthry for the fowl whin it struck me that they might be here. So I opened the dure, an' in I wint. There they wor, as dead as Julius Saysar; but no trace of me fox. I wint over, and stooped down to count thim; and faith, it wasn't me prayers I was sayin.' I took up wan, and just thin, I felt somethin' lep on me back; and out wint Mr. Fox through the winda."

"There's no ind to him," was the verdict; but Henry

Liston took away with him not only the conviction that the fox was a highly intelligent animal, and therefore deserving of every respect; but that he had also certain homely virtues, such as fidelity and gratitude, which do not always accompany acuteness and cleverness in his human friends. But he noticed that these redeeming features were forgotten, and nothing remembered but the baser qualifications in man and brute.

A few mornings after he had been entertained with the "fox," he had an instance of what the higher and nobler being can do. The conversation had turned this morning on the prevalence of bribery at elections; and the general conviction appeared to be that every man had his price, and that there was no office, no matter how great or how small, that was not sought for and obtained by intriguing, cunning, and bribery.

"They may say what they like," said one of the guests, "about gettin' the best man for this, that, and the other thing; but 't isn't the best man, but the longest purse that wins. But I hard some time ago a shtory that bangs Banagher. A widda, and," he looked around to see if he was compromising himself, and then he went on, "and sure widdas are the divil, — had a son, who she thought would look nice in a dispensary. So she brought the *bouchal* home from England, and ran him. People said that she bribed right, left, and front; but, begor, if she did, some other fella had a longer purse, and her boy was *bate*."

"An' she lost all her money?" some one exclaimed.

"Did she?" said the speaker. "Didn't I tell ye she was a widda? Didn't I?"

"You did," was the reply.

"Thin, how could she be *bate*? She wasn't, faix. But she bate the whole Boord of Guardians hollow. She bribed by cheque. Thim that had cashed her cheque, and took the money, she had thim caught; for there was her evidence agin thim, and it meant two years' imprisonment. They were glad enough to pay her back. Thim that

held the cheques, she blocked thim by stoppin' the cheques in the Bank, and they were glad enough to give 'em back, too."

"But, sure, she was caught herself in the bribing?"

"Av coorse she was; but what did she care? They weren't goin' to inform on a 'uman; and faix, she'd go to gaol willingly enough, if she could sind twenty-two Guardians before her."

All of which was received with an uproarious laugh as the climax, apogee, and perfection of all human cuteness.

It made Henry Liston reflect a little, and preach his little homily on vulpine and human depravity, with the result that he elicited a broad grin from his audience, and a severe homily from his pastor.

But it made him reflect; and, as we have said, his reflections were helped a good deal by the abstinence of Lent. The conviction now began slowly to dawn on his mind that somehow the people had got off the track. The "ould dacency" of which he had heard so much from his mother had gone. The people were beginning to be ashamed of nothing but failure — that of which they had the least reason to be ashamed. They were no longer ashamed of foul trickery, of base dealings with one another, of shady and doubtful acts, which would have kept away whole families from Mass a few years ago. It had passed into an article of religion now, that the whole business of life was to succeed, no matter by what means. The nation seemed to have put its honour in pledge, or in its pocket; and all the lofty idealism, all the consecrated and time-honoured traditions, that had so distinguished the race in the past, were now deliberately rejected with rude jokes and low pleasantries; and all the lower and baser motives of self and success were adopted as an ethic and a religion.

Henry Liston was young and the vast enthusiasm of youth had not yet degenerated into cynicism through a sense of hopelessness and failure. It is a grand thing to see these young lads come forward, hope shining in

their eyes, and courage driving the pulse-beats of martial ardour through brain and muscle and nerve. You dare not speak to them of degeneracy and national apostasy and a gray and gloomy future. They admit there are faults, and symptoms of decay, and a loosening of bonds, and the gray ashes of a dead patriotism. But, what are they there for, these young priests, but to eliminate those faults, and arrest that decay, and tighten those bonds, and blow those gray ashes into a flame that will warm and lighten all the land? Yes, that is their duty; for that the holy oils were rubbed on their palms and fingers by consecrating prelates; and for this they have to labour and toil and expend themselves and die, if needs be, in the struggle. Of what consequence to humanity, thought Henry Liston, is it whether Ideas are innate or acquired; why an Archangel and not one of the Thrones or Dominations was sent to announce the awful mystery of the Incarnation? There are more pressing questions for solution now. And he made up his mind, after the first round of stations, that his pastor, over there in his library, blinding his eyes over the perplexities of abstract problems that never would be solved, might be a picturesque object as a lonely and solitary student. But the age needed somewhat more. In fact what the age needed was — *himself*!

It was the springtime, too; and under its invigorating influence the life-blood was pouring hot into his brain; and every faculty was kindling into a stream of fresh energies and hopes, and resolutions. The thrushes were tolling out their bell-peals from every bush and thicket, and the smaller songsters were chirping and love-making with their little lyric voices down along vale and hollow and even in the bitter salt-marshes of the sea. There was a warm perfumed breath from Nature's teeming bosom on the air; and all the senses were flattered into new pleasures by the ever-varying potencies of Nature in her new birth. And the young priest felt the vivifying influences all around him; and he thought he should shake off the torpor

of winter, and infuse into the sordid breasts of these poor peasants some new principles and motives for their life-conduct. So he sat down and wrote rapidly, for the thoughts were burning in his brain, a sermon that was long after famous in the parish, and which he called "The Man behind the Gun."

The idea was taken from what had occurred in one of those delicious struggles, which, notwithstanding Hague Conferences, Angels of Peace, etc., etc., seem to be part and parcel of the Human Drama, just as dangerous humours in the human body break out into hot eruptions, or take the more deadly form of low fever. And Henry drew a graphic picture of the two hostile armaments, equal in armour-plating, size and weight and calibre of guns, etc., approaching each other silently on Pacific or other seas, until the first shot shrills out; and in a few hours, one fleet is reduced to old scrap-iron on the floor of the sea, or towed captive into some hostile harbour; and the other, uninjured walks the waters with flags flying and captured ships in its wake. Now, where lies the difference here, quoth Henry. Equal in armament, equal in guns, equal in magazines — the one is shattered, the other triumphant? What was the magic factor? Clearly, the man behind the gun! And the moral of the sermon, elaborately drawn out and embellished, is the well-known and hackneyed one — that what we want in Ireland is not *measures*, but *men*! Henry Liston, youthful and enthusiastic, thought the discovery unique and original. Alas! has it not been the theme of every essay, poem, political dissertation, philosophic conjecture, for the past thousand years? And are not we as far away from the solution as ever?

CHAPTER XXIII

REMINISCENCES

So thought his venerable pastor, who read him a homily on the subject, to which Henry listened with bowed head and burning cheek, but with a decidedly unconvinced and unconverted spirit.

"Sit down," said the grim old man, pointing to the pillory. "I have heard of this sermon of yours, and I am not finding fault with it, except to say that I think if you would keep steadily insisting on and explaining the Ten Commandments, you would do more good than by 'beating the air' with such foolish rhetoric. But, rhetoric is always the bane of young men."

"Then you don't agree with me, sir!" said Henry, mildly, "that the great want in Ireland, just now, is *men* — I mean, manly, Christian men, strong, straightforward —"

"*Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera*," interposed his pastor. "Yes, I agree with you thoroughly. Only I would go further and say: It is the want of the whole world. Why mark out Ireland? Is it not the universal necessity?"

"I don't know," said Henry. "But I think 'tis a mistake for us to be speculating on the universe, instead of looking to our own needs."

"Now, that's good!" said his pastor, approvingly. "That is well said. What remark is that you made about putty-men?"

"I said," said Henry, somewhat annoyed to find that every expression had been so carefully noted, "that you cannot build a house of putty-bricks; and you cannot build a nation of putty-men."

"That is admirable, really admirable!" said his pastor; and whether he spoke sarcastically, or in conviction, Henry could not determine. "But no one contests such a plain truth, I suppose?"

"No! —" said Henry dubiously.

"What then?" said the old man with his stern logic. "Where's the need of repeating such a truism?"

"Because," said Henry, argumentatively, "you must show the want to have it supplied, I suppose."

"Quite so," was the answer. "But how do you propose to supply it?"

"By preaching it in season, and out of season," said Henry boldly. "By casting scorn on all that is base and despicable, and turning the minds of the people to higher things."

It was a pretty piece of eloquence; and, as it merited, there was great silence. Soon this became embarrassing; and Henry said, with some hesitation and a little blush:

"Ireland seems to me to-day like a man blindfolded in sport, trying to make his way to the light, by catching at everything with outstretched hands."

"A pretty simile!" said the pastor, taking a huge pinch of snuff, and then handing the box to his curate. "Ireland seems to me to be like a flock of sheep, rushing pellmell over a precipice into a muck-heap."

"Don't you see, my dear Henry," he continued, after a pause, "that all the old ideals are vanished, and they can no more return than the elves and fairies that used to dance in the moonlight? All the old grand ideas of love of country, love to one another, the sense of honour, the sense of decency — all are gone! Up to twenty years ago, in some way those ideals were there, broken perhaps and distorted; but they were there. Then, for the first time, an appeal was made by public men — I won't call them demagogues or even politicians — to the nation's cupidity. Instead of the old passionate war-cry, *Ireland for the Irish!* they sank to the Socialistic cry, *The land for the People!* They've got it now! They

have the land; and they fling Ireland to the devil. Each man's interest now is centred in his bounds-ditch. He cannot, and he will not, look beyond. He has come into his inheritance; and he sends his mother to the work-house!"

Henry was so appalled at these words, and they bore so sternly on all the experience he had been acquiring during the past few weeks, that he could only say faintly:

"But surely, sir, it was a grand thing to win back from the descendants of Cromwellians and Elizabethans the soil of Ireland? Surely our fathers would exult if they could see such a day! There never was such a radical, yet bloodless revolution!"

"Yes, yes," said his pastor, "if it rested there. But you see the appeal to the nation's cupidity, and its success, have hardened the hearts of the people. So long as there was a Cromwellian landlord to be fought and conquered, there remained before the eyes of the people some image of their country. Now, the fight is over; and they are sinking down into the abject and awful condition of the French peasant, who doesn't care for king or country; and only asks: Who is going to reduce the rates?"

"It would have been better then for our people to remain as they were?" asked Henry, "with rack-rents, tumbling houses, the workhouse, and the emigrant-vessel?"

"There again is the illogical, capricious, fickle brain of the young man of our generation," said his pastor. "I didn't say that. When will you young men learn the value of words and their meaning? Look at that clock!"

Henry looked up to where a plainly-mounted clock was moving its hands slowly forward under a glass shade.

"Every hour," continued his pastor, "pushes me nearer my grave. It is not pleasant. I would rather go back a little. But I cannot. If I were to put back the hand on the dial, would it lengthen my life?"

"No!" said Henry.

"In the same way," said the old man, "I know right well that it is useless to stop, or to try to stop the progress, or evolution, of a nation. It is part of the eternal onwardness of things. There is no putting back the hand on the dial. But, there are times when I yearn for the grand old people that are gone; for the grand old ideas they held as a religion. Perhaps it is old age, and I am become the *laudator temporis acti*; but, whilst I am not blind to the follies and drawbacks of the past, I cannot help thinking that those times were greater than ours."

He seemed to sink into a reverie of memory, and Henry, touched by the appearance of sentiment in this stern old logician, who breathed syllogisms, was also silent.

After a long interval, during which the young curate saw a tender light creep down over the strong features of his pastor, the latter woke up, and said, in tones of unusual tenderness:

"I remember, when I was a young curate (it was in your native town), I was summoned one wet wild night to a sick call. The rain was coming down in torrents, and before I got well into the main street I was wet through. As I was passing along, I heard a fine manly voice echoing through the deserted street; and I soon came upon a group of young lads who were gathered round a ballad-singer, who had taken up his position in front of a well-lighted shop. I just glanced at him as I was passing; and something about him struck my fancy. He was no ordinary, ragged, impecunious ballad-singer. That was clear enough. He was well dressed; and, as the gas-light fell on his face, I saw that he was a Fenian emissary. The sharp, clear-cut face, the heavy moustache, the right hand sunk in the breast pocket of his coat, his erect military bearing, left no room for doubt. I slipped into a shop for a moment. The proprietor came down to interview me. I said: 'Stop, Tom, a moment. Don't speak! I want to listen!' And it was well worth listening to. It was the famous song:

See who comes over the red-blossomed heather,
Their green banners kissing the pure mountain air.

Did you ever hear it?"

"No!" said Henry Liston. "I cannot remember having heard it."

"Of course not. But you know:

Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,
Röslein auf der Heiden."

Henry held down his head. Clearly, he was never to hear the end of that unfortunate poem.

"Never mind!" said his pastor, continuing. "It is only another sign of the decadence of the age. But I tell you 'twas a grand song, and it thrilled me through and through. It was a song for *men*, the *men* you are dreaming about now. And it was a song for Ireland: every line breathed freedom—the freedom of the mountain, and the glen, of the moorland and the ocean. There in that dingy shop, I saw it all—the troops under their banners, debouching around the curves of the mountains, and swelled every moment with new contingents from every hamlet and cabin; their captains on horseback; their pipes playing; and 'Freedom throned on each proud spirit there!' It was all a dream, of course, but a glorious dream. And, not all a dream; because the spirit that breathed from that man seemed to have infected even the children; and the poor little beggars spread themselves out into vedettes all along the street to warn the 'Fenian' when the police were coming."

There never was a more surprised individual in this world than Henry Liston, as he watched with awe and tenderness this new revelation in his stern and sarcastic superior. The latter, as if enchanted with the memory of things, took a pinch of snuff and went on:

"A few nights later, the moon was shining full upon one of the glens in the neighbourhood, flooding all the off-side with light but leaving the wooded side in complete

darkness, when, getting home by a short-cut across the hills, I suddenly stumbled on a detachment of Fenians, who were being drilled in the wood. The place was so dark I would have passed by, not seeing them, but there again was that strange thrill that one feels in the presence of something hidden and ghostly. And I could just hear the shuffling of feet and the suppressed breathing of men. I was passing on rapidly — for I knew they would not like to be detected, even by me — when I was suddenly challenged:

“‘Halt! who goes there?’ — ‘A friend,’ I said. — ‘Halt, friend, and give the countersign!’ — This was awkward. But I braved it out; and I said gaily: ‘Sarsfield is the word; and Sarsfield is the man!’ — ‘Dat’s not the countersign!’ said the voice, which I now recognized as that of a fellow named Jerry Kinsella, whom I had cuffed well at his Catechism not twelve months before. The thing now was awkward; but just then an American officer came up, and challenged me. I explained. And all was right in a moment. But, as I moved away, I heard Jerry saying, as if in answer to a challenge: ‘Begobs, if it was any wan else, I’d have run him through.’”

“Now, here is the queer part of the matter. I knew all these fellows well, — Jack Carthy, the butcher; Jem Clancy, the baker; Joe Feely, the carpenter — and in ordinary life, made little of them. But, somehow, the fact of their being Fenians threw a glamour around them in my mind’s eye; and I never after met them in the ordinary walks of life, but I looked on them with a kind of shy respect. It was the *idea* that glorified and transfigured these poor workmen into patriots. When I had crossed the stream, and mounted the glen on the other side, I stood still for a moment, strangely touched by what I had seen. Looking back, I could discern nothing beneath the dense darkness of the pine-wood. But just then, there pealed out from the heights above a bugle-call. It was the cavalry call of British soldiers —

Come, come to your stables,
My boys, when you're able,
Come, come to your stables,
My jolly dragoons!

"It sounded for all the world to my ears as the rallying-call of the people; and, coupled with what I had seen in the valley, it seemed that there beneath the darkness were gathered for conquest and victory the embattled legions of the motherland. I heard next day that it was only a bank clerk who was amusing some young lady friends with a cornet; but it was a long time before the imagination let go the fancy, and let reason reign again."

The old man seemed so buried in the past that Henry had not the courage to bring him back to the dolorous present. But he well understood what was working in his mind.

"Good God!" said the old man at length, "if those fellows were alive now, what would they be? I heard all their confessions the day before they went out to the rising. Of course, I saw it was madness; and I did all in my power to stop them. But I couldn't. There was the oath binding them to do impossibilities. But it was a glorious madness. What would they be now? Porter-drinking, platform-storming politicians, murdering one another for some scoundrel of a landlord on the one hand; or some equal scoundrel of a demagogue on the other."

"Well," the old man continued, "the rising came off; and, of course, it was a miserable *fiasco*. The men had no arms, and were practically undrilled. They fell away at once before organized force. And yet, because the whole thing was animated by an idea, it was great and heroic. Two or three years after, I happened to be dining at the College one evening. I forget now, it is so long gone, what took me there. But I remember there was a whisper around the halls that an ex-convict, a Fenian, — one, too, who had been sentenced to be hanged, drawn, and quartered — had been asked by the great bishop to dine that day. I believe the poor fellow

was only a few days out of prison, and had come there to see his sister, who was a Presentation nun. We all sat down to dinner, the priests at the head-table with the bishop; and there was some disappointment, as the guest was not appearing. Then, the door opened quietly; and in there walked a small, thin, pale, insignificant-looking man, except for one thing — you'd never guess?"

"I give it up," said Henry, much interested.

"Except for his *cropped head*. The gray hair was only recovering from the convict's clip. It was his aureole of honour; his nimbus of sanctity. The whole assembly, bishop, priests, and students, stood up, as if they had an electric shock; and clapped and cheered, and clapped and thundered, until the little man had gone over, received the bishop's blessing kneeling, and taken his place at the bishop's right-hand. It was a great ovation and a righteous one. The man was the representative of an idea; and that idea had become an article of faith to us."

The old man paused, as if trying to recollect something. Then, he said quietly, but with bitter emphasis:

"I believe, some time ago, an attempt was made on the life of that man by some of our dear fellow-countrymen at some paltry election. What the English law couldn't do, the hands of Irishmen tried to do. Yes, we are becoming a practical people."

The lesson was sinking deeply into the mind of the young priest, who was exceedingly perturbed by all that he was hearing and witnessing.

"Clearly, then," he said at length, "the matter stands thus. Whilst we cling to a great idea, we make no progress. When we do progress, we lose our spirituality, — our great dreams and ambitions. Is there no such thing as combining the two?"

And his pastor had to answer sadly:

"No!"

"You have no faith then, sir, in the new Gaelic League?"

"Old age is not the time for faith or hope," said the old man. "It is the time of regret for lost chances and

opportunities. I know all about this League. But just see! They are bringing back the *letter* of the language; but where is the *spirit* of patriotism? The Gaelic League has brought back Cuchullin and Ossian, and Naomh; it might as well have brought back Homer and his Odyssey. But by throwing the thoughts of the young into the far perspective of years, it has overleaped the present. Nay, it has deliberately blotted out the whole of the nineteenth century, — its mighty epochs, '98, '48, and '67; and, by the scorn it has cast upon what it is pleased to call Anglo-Irish writers, it has wiped out from the memory of men such names as Grattan, Flood, Emmet, Tone, Davis, Duffy, Mitchel, Martin, Kickham, and the rest."

"You are giving me electric shocks this morning," said Henry Liston faintly. "You are upsetting all my beliefs and making me a political infidel."

"Don't take all I say for granted," said the old man, with a touching absence of that dogmatism which was an essential element of his character when dealing with theological matters. "I am old in years; older in experiences. But just test what I say! Go into your schools, where the children are learning Irish. Ask them to sing one of Moore's melodies — the swan-songs of dying Ireland. In vain. Speak to them of Mitchel or Meagher. They never heard such names. Ask them to recite 'Fontenoy' or 'Clare's Dragoons.' They could more easily sing a chorus from Sophocles. I said a while ago that the people had got back their inheritance, and sent their mother to the workhouse. They are now getting back their language to ignore all that was noble and sacred in their history. But, you see, I am old. Don't mind me, Henry! Do your best in your own way. I am old; and I cling to dreams of the past. I'd rather have one strand of the rope that hanged these poor boys over there in Manchester than all the 'collars of gold' which the ancient Irish robbed from each other after spoiling the proud invader."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE "GHOST" IN HAMLET

THE Easter week of that year was a happy week for at least three of our actors in this little drama. Annie had come up to Athboy, to spend the Easter holidays with her friend, Mary Liston. They were recent acquaintances; but a few interchanges of opinion on dress and such like subjects had ripened, as if with a torrid sun, the acquaintance into a fast friendship. After a few days, they could open out the recesses of their most hidden thoughts to each other, and revel in that spontaneous confidence that belongs only to the young.

They had visited Rohira again by special request of Dr. Wycherly; they had seen the gardens. They had been overwhelmed at first by the sight of nearly two acres of ground, literally covered with spring flowers, although large quantities had been shipped away to the London markets by steamers that called and hung out in the offing and sent their boats ashore, or availed of the services of Pete, the Gypsy, who was quite indifferent whether he carried lobsters or orchids, so long as he was well paid.

Then, after such a surfeit of beauty and perfume, these young souls fell back on the narrower pleasure of the simple bouquets that Dr. Wycherly forced upon them. For to some souls a single rose speaks more eloquently than a tangled forest of rose-trees; just as we watch a single planet in the heavens, and are blind to the infinite suns.

Edward Wycherly, the returned one, and the unwelcome, was particularly assiduous in his attention to the two young ladies; and, whilst Henry was being enter-

tained by the Doctor with all manner of strange information about Hindus and their arts, and modern diseases and modern science, his son was wrapping the senses and imagination of the two young girls in an aromatic cloud of incense from garden and hothouse, and a poetical cloud of Oriental poetry and legend, which he had gathered in his travels.

Yet, the verdict passed upon him there during the Easter holidays by these two guileless girls was not altogether favourable. Mary Liston declared him handsome; but the beauty, she thought, was of a sinister kind. Annie was silent. When she spoke, she declared her intention, with all her usual positiveness, not to meet him again, if it were at all possible. And so he was dismissed.

During these beautiful, sunny days, and in the long evenings, it was quite inevitable that those three young people gathered around the fireplace should discuss many things of interest to themselves and others. Henry Liston hardly knew which of the three pleasures he preferred — reading in a listless way there by the fireside, whilst his sister and her young friend were at the piano; or, listening in a dreamy way to some old Irish melody, quaint and weird and lonely as the winds that were sighing around the house, or some modern study, fantasie, or nocturne from a foreign master; or debating with those keen young intellects the eternal question, What is to be done for Ireland? For there is the problem that is ever uppermost in the minds and hearts of the young. The old have despaired of the solution, and are now spectators. But the young are forever dreaming, and the things that people their dreams seem to be ever flying, like flocks of birds, down the long vistas of hope.

On one point there seemed to be absolute and perfect agreement — the necessity of infusing some brightness into the homes of the people, of turning a little sunshine and music into the dreary and silent monotony of their lives.

And so the Easter holidays melted into May; and the

May blossoms fell, and the burning suns of June and July turned everything into gray gold. And August and September came on with their russet mantles and the rich fruitage of the year. And the days closed in, as the leaves fell in mellow October. But the idea was always haunting the mind of Henry Liston that he was bound to brighten the sombre lives that fretted away into the grave in a still and gray monotony of labour and anxiety; and he determined that during the winter he would not only establish the Gaelic League in his parish, in spite of the melancholy forebodings of his pastor; but he would further enliven things in general with a series of concerts, plays, etc., that would be instructive and amusing to his people.

During these months, however, a few things, of some moment to our chief actors, did occur. Edward Wycherly, the defeated one, did persuade his father to remove the boys from the dangerous atmosphere of the priest's house; and, spun and plucked at his own examination, he nevertheless succeeded in getting his brother through his matriculation in the autumn. Jack kicked against the arrangement at first; but was obliged to yield on the compromise that Miss O'Farrell was to be asked occasionally to visit Rohira. In this he was ably and enthusiastically seconded by Dion. The heir-apparent of Rohira seemed to object; but, somehow, he managed to be always present when Annie O'Farrell called.

The emergency-men were withdrawn from Kerins's farm; and Kerins entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with Pete the Gypsy.

Judith seemed to be gaining greater power over the minds of the people; for now, eggs were found in greater abundance in the furrows of the gardens, — eggs that would not break, if cast into the flames, but glowed like heated iron; and on the door-posts of dairies a strange kind of grease, like that which is used in railway-wagons, was often found smeared, and frequently a mysterious and unwholesome meat was discovered in the field. All these

were ancient charms and spells, under the name *pishogues* well known to the people. But now they seemed to be everywhere; and, as a result, the milk would not yield an ounce of cream; the calves perished in the fields, or were born dead; and the people whispered amongst themselves in low accents of fear and apprehension. Some, the more religious and godly, feared the anger of God had descended on the parish for their insubordination toward their pastor. Some thought it was the diabolic influence of Judith that was working ruin. But no one, not even the bravest, would approach that gray old keep down there by the sea-breakers. Its inhabitants were as safe from observation as if they lived far out from the mainland. Only one seemed to watch, and ponder, infidel as he was, on these nocturnal apparitions of the Castle Spectre; and he soon made up his mind as to what they portended. Jack and Dion Wycherly were incredulous, but inquisitive; but Edward Wycherly took a closer interest in the denizens of the castle; and his increasing interest was viewed by them with apprehension and hate.

At Athboy, Mary Liston came and went on her angel visits from her home in the town, brightening her brother's solitary life with her sweet presence, for brother and sister loved each other dearly. And hence, when one evening, after a protracted absence, Mary Liston came up from town, and asked her brother to walk with her over the cliffs, Henry felt that there was something coming. And there was. For when his sister had explained that she had made all arrangements in the early summer to enter at the beginning of the approaching autumn the convent where she had studied, Henry felt that half his life was cut away, although he dared not oppose his sister's resolution. He came home, and took his tea in silence. That was all.

Down at Doonvarragh, the old pastor, whilst giving full time to his parochial duties, seemed more absorbed than ever in his theological studies. He had become somewhat sceptical about human things; and was looking

steadily toward the divine. He had mounted the declivities of life; and, looking back, had seen its utter barrenness and waste. His eyes were turned toward the west, where the sun of his life was sinking under shining seas. It was no little relief to him when those evening tuitions were at an end. He knew he had made a mistake, but he could not correct it. Circumstances and the slow progress of events settled the problem for him; and now he could revel in his studies without the uneasy consciousness that under his roof was a practical problem that perplexed him. But, day by day and every day his sight seemed to grow dimmer. Again and again his oculist changed his glasses. This gave relief; but again they began to fail him, and he had to procure yet stronger lenses. One day he asked the man, was this cataract? The answer was, I wish it were! which implied that it was something worse, and probably incurable. Hence he began to lean more and more on the help of his young niece, who had now grown into his heart. The feeling of irksomeness, which her presence had brought into his solitary life in the beginning, had now given way to a feeling of dependence upon her, so he almost resented her absence during the visits she paid to her young friends at Athboy. As for Annie herself, there was creeping into her life an undefined sense of loneliness; and, except on the few occasions when she visited the Listons, her young years were sinking into a drear monotony; and she was beginning to be a dreamer, which means discontent and unhappiness at one's own surroundings. And a few times she found tears gathering in her eyes, and she had to wipe them gently away!

As the days narrowed, and the nights lengthened in October, Henry Liston decided that the time had come to commence his cherished project of throwing a little light and music into the hearts of his people. He wrote to a valued confrère in the neighbouring town and asked advice and assistance, both of which were promptly given. This experienced purveyor of instruction and amusement

recommended that the academical session at Athboy or Lackagh should commence with something "stunning," in order to stimulate the flagging energies of the people. Hence he pooh-poohed a mere concert, and rather humbled Henry Liston by throwing scorn on a gramophone entertainment which Henry had humbly suggested. Instead of such juvenile things, "fit only for school children," he said, he proposed to send up his own Dramatic Corps of the Young Men's Society, all picked men, and capable of every kind of histrionic engagement. These young Keans and Kembles had advanced, by leaps and bounds, from "Pizarro; or the Conquest of Peru" to the "Lady of Lyons"; and, lately, spurning everything dramatic that did not come from the highest genius, they had given with marvellous success, and for three nights running, "Hamlet, Prince of Denmark," of which, he hinted, Henry had perhaps heard. He could send the whole troupe, except the "Ghost." This being a minor part, it could be supplied by a local artist. The properties, dresses, scenery, he recommended, should be procured from the Theatre Royal; but he would manage all that. The expenses would be trifling. A few little items for car-hire, refreshments, etc. The balance of profits could be expended in local charities. He was disinterested and sublime.

It seemed to the inexperienced mind of Henry Liston a pretty programme. It would be a magnificent launch for his new ideas on the seas of experience. He was quite sure of a good house. The thing was a novelty. The people were willing to be amused; and they thought nothing of the shillings they had to pay. A few wary spirits, on reading over the spirited programme, fumbled in their pockets, and expressed a doubt whether "it would be value for their money." But the young people, who happily had not yet begun to calculate the money value of everything, overruled these sceptics; and long before the eventful evening arrived, every seat, amongst the reserved benches, was engaged.

Henry Liston had a small dinner party, consisting of his sister and Annie O'Farrell, and the good confrère who had suggested this happy idea; and they drove together to the Lackagh school, where the entertainment was to be held. The school-room was very large and spacious, having been built for the accommodation of two hundred children on the separate system. The two schools were now thrown into one, and there was a class-room at the end which served admirably as a dressing-room for the performers.

There was not even standing-room in the hall when the priests arrived; but their places and the seats for the ladies who accompanied them were kept carefully with that mute sense of reverence which is universally shown to the priesthood in Ireland. Right in front of where they sat, Henry Liston recognized the local Protestant rector, who was also Archdeacon of the Diocese, and with him were his wife and sister.

The stage was prettily arranged, and a magnificent drop-scene, representing the River Lee and Blackrock Castle by moonlight, was just sufficiently raised to afford a peep at the splendour of back scenes and side-wings. There was a murmur of eager applause when the actors in the first scene appeared; but this was rapidly changed into fright when the "Ghost" came forth with dreadful solemnity from the side-wings, and Horatio challenged it. "It" was impersonated by a local artist, named Tim Finucane or Finigan, who, in the ordinary stage of life, helped his neighbours by putting slates on the roofs of outhouses and barns, when the fierce storms that beat along this unprotected coast had laid angry hands on them. He was rather small of stature, and it happened that his ghostly raiment was unusually long; so that he was obliged to raise it in front, as a lady raises her dress when crossing a muddy street. His face was covered with chalk, and his hair was powdered with flour. Altogether, he was a ghastly sight, and there was a panic amongst the children at his first appearance. In the

first scene he had nothing to say, as the "Ghost" was to refuse the invitation of Horatio, probably because that young man called "it" angry names, such as "illusion," etc.; and hinted rather broadly that the ghost was a thief. But Tim made up for the enforced silence, by rolling his eyes dreadfully, taking in the full orbit of the audience; and then he retired, gracefully holding up his garment in front. It was only then it began to dawn on the people, and particularly on the "gods" at the rear of the hall, that the "Ghost" was verily and indeed no other than their own Timothy Finigan. Hence there was terrible disappointment and much remorse, for they thought Tim would not appear again.

This, however, passed away for the moment when "the melancholy Dane," clad in a velvet doublet slashed with silver, and in gorgeous nether habiliments, stepped forward and commenced his dialogue with the King. It was then that Henry Liston recognized in the graceful and handsome figure his friend Delane. With a gasp of surprise, he turned to his brother-cleric and said:

"Why that's Delane that's doing 'Hamlet'!"

"Of course!" said his friend calmly. "Do you know him? A born artist! Irving couldn't hold a candle to him, if he got a fair chance. But those London fellows found out that he was Irish; and, that was enough! He was hunted from the stage."

"But," said Henry Liston — here he was compelled to stop in the midst of his hostile criticism, through sheer admiration of the magnificent contempt and hidden hatred which Delane poured into his words to the King and Queen. Of course there was some Celtic exaggeration, but the fellow, in some mysterious manner, seemed to have caught the spirit of the immortal author; and Henry, carried away by his enthusiasm, could not help saying:

"There's no good talking. If we had just a trace of education, we'd sweep the whole world before us."

A sentiment with which most observers will cordially agree.

"But," continued Henry, "doesn't our friend find it necessary to float his powerful mind in something besides tea?"

"Of course!" replied his clerical brother. "That is part of the programme. Every genius drinks, or goes mad."

"The fellow told me, when he was working at my house, that he was crossed in love," said Henry.

"He tells the same story every night in some public house in M——," was the reply. "Sometimes 'tis a duchess; sometimes an actress; and so on. He told them all about you. But he said you lacked imagination; that you had never heard of the 'Ancient Mariner.'"

"The ruffian!" said Henry Liston. "But here comes the 'Ghost' again!"

This time the "Ghost" appeared more lugubrious than before, possibly because now he had to make certain revelations to Hamlet, the burden of which, even with the aid of a prompter, was too much for Tim Finigan's brain. He seemed paralyzed at first, rolling his eyes over his audience, and letting them rest with apprehension on the "gods" at the end of the hall. It was irresistible — the temptation that now seized them. Tim's ghostly aspect suggested the immortal song: *Tim Finigan's Wake*; and no sooner was it suggested than a young fellow commenced to Tim's apparent horror to sing:

One morning Tim felt rather dull,
His head it ached, which made him shake,
He fell from the ladder, and broke his skull;
They carried him home his corpse to wake:
They rouled him up in a nate, clane sheet,
And laid him out upon the bed;
With six mould candles at his feet;
And a bottle of whiskey at his head.
Whack-fal-la; your sowl to glory!
Welt the flure! your trotters shake!
Wasn't it all the truth I told ye —
Lots of fun at Finigan's wake!

All this time the "Ghost" stood paralyzed with anger — hatred and more than histrionic rage passing over his whitened face. A few times he stretched forth his hand threateningly toward the "boys," which action, of course, increased the merriment; and when the first strophe was ended, Tim's deep voice was heard echoing down the hall:

"Ye bla—gards!"

There was a roar of laughter, which made Tim repeat, despite the dignified remonstrances of Hamlet, who stood by in an attitude of offended majesty:

"Ye Lackagh bla—gards! Wait till I'm done wid de pla—ay!"

He then turned around, and attempted to address the dignified Hamlet, who was gracefully pulling his moustache; but the moment Tim opened his mouth, the boys struck up again:

Micky Mulvany raised his head,
Whin a bottle of whiskey flew at him,
It missed him, and striking agin the bed,
The sperrits spattered over Tim.
Bedad, he revived, see how he rises,
Timothy jumping from the bed,
Swears while he wallops them all, like blazes,
T'ainim an Dhiaoul! Do ye think I'm dead?

Whack-fal-la-fal-la-fal-lady
Welt the floor! Your trotters shake!
Wasn't it all the truth I told ye—
Lots of fun at Finigan's wake!

Here the angry "Ghost," threatening fire and brimstone, was pulled in; and the young priest, who had sent his troupe up from M——, rose solemnly; and, in a few, politely sarcastic words about the intellectual backwardness of the people of that parish, their utter want of appreciation of a great drama, and the intense vulgarity of that rowdy song, he had them all soon reduced into humiliated silence. He then sorrowfully, and with tears in his voice, expressed his regret that in an assembly of Irishmen such a rowdy song reflecting upon the Irish

character should be tolerated for a moment. Englishmen might laugh at such revolting caricatures of the Irish character, but surely in the new awakening of the nation, when Irishmen were beginning to exercise, as well as to feel, that self-respect which belongs to every free people, and the absence of which only characterizes enslaved nationalities, surely such songs of the nation's slavery as that which they had just listened to should not for a moment be tolerated by a people awakening to a sense of their dignity and importance. He had only yielded to the importunities of his friend, Father Liston, in order that new light might be thrown into the lives of the people. If he had for a moment anticipated this gross and unseemly interruption to the progress of the play, he would not have dreamed of bringing his dramatic troupe into their village. In conclusion, he begged of them not to interrupt further by such unseemly demonstrations. Otherwise, he should be reluctantly obliged to suspend the performance; and this would not only be a personal loss to themselves, but would reflect unending discredit on the people of that parish.

This discourse was received in respectful silence; the only comment was made at its termination :

"Begor, we couldn't help it, yer reverence. The tim-tation was too great!"

Meanwhile, Henry Liston was occupied by another reflection, which not only made him quite insensible to the honour, or dishonour, of his parish; but completely spoiled all his interest in the play to the end. He had noticed, that, on the last appearance of the "Ghost," the archdeacon, who sat right in front, leaned over to his wife, and, pointing to the "Ghost," seemed to make some excited comments on his appearance. And a dreadful thought then and there took hold of Henry Liston's imagination. It so preoccupied him that he did not exchange a word, except a brief "Yes" and "No" with his confrère, who had an uneasy consciousness that perhaps he had gone too far in his remarks, and that

his good friend, Henry Liston, was offended for his severe strictures on the conduct of the people.

The play seemed to drag on interminably; but all things have an end; and the moment the people began to rise up and file out of the hall, Henry Liston whispered to his sister, "Wait for me outside!" and he leaped up the rude steps that led to the stage, and thence to the dressing-room. The lamp that flared on the wall revealed the performers, more or less in deshabille, as they put off the dramatic costumes, and assumed the garments of ordinary civilization. Hamlet, however, was still in his slashed velvet doublet and silk stockings, and was leaning in a dignified and melancholy manner against the side scenes. The "Ghost" was seated on a trunk which had contained some of the stage "properties"; and his head was bent down between his legs in an attitude of mournful and despairing resignation.

"I say," said Henry Liston, in an excited manner, "did all these costumes come from the Theatre?"

"Yes, sir!" said Hamlet. "They belong to the lessees of the Temple of Thespis in Cork."

"They — do — not!" said the "Ghost" in an emphatic, but mournful manner.

"So I thought!" said Henry. "In the name of God, Finigan, what possessed you to take this thing?"

He pointed to the white linen garment, with the very voluminous sleeves, which the "Ghost" was wearing.

"Why the mischief," he continued in an angry and excited manner, "didn't you come to me? I'd have lent you a surplice."

"Yarra, what good 'ud be your surplus?" said the Ghost. "Shure, you're surplus wouldn't rache to a man's hips. And, besides, wor we goin' to commit a sacrilege by wearin' a priesht's vestments?"

"All I know is," said the young priest, "you have committed one in the eyes of the law now, if you cannot get back that — article, before the thing is discovered."

"Yarra, make your mind aisy, yer reverence," said

Tim. "You're too narvous intirely. Them that took the ould minister's shirt can put it back again."

"I hope they will, and quickly," said Henry Liston. "You wouldn't be so easy in your mind, if you saw the way he was watching you during the play!"

"He may go to the divil," quoth Tim. And Henry Liston left him in peace.

He hastened out to find his sister alone, standing near the side-car, awaiting him.

"Where's Annie?" he said.

"Gone home," was the reply.

"Gone home? I understood she was coming back with us?"

"She changed her mind. I heard Mr. Wycherly say that it would be a pleasure if she allowed him drive her to her uncle's gate. And she consented. The Wycherlys are gone a quarter of an hour."

So they were. They drove along the moon-lit road, passing groups of passengers here and there, who gave way as the car passed; and then closed in, making uncomplimentary remarks on car and passengers. The two young boys, Jack and Dion, were on one wing of the car, Annie and Ned Wycherly on the other. The drive was short, barely two miles. But when she alighted, she passed into her uncle's house without a word of thanks or farewell; and that night a weary head pressed her pillow, and bitter tears bedewed it. So powerful is the utterance of a word in the ears of the innocent. It was only one word from the play they had just witnessed; but it revealed the beast that is in man.

But he was unconcerned. For just as they left the priest's gate, a pyramid of flame shot up into the sky from the summit of the hill, on which their father's house was built.

"Duggan's rick is on fire!" said Jack.

"No! 'tis Kerins's house and out-offices," said his brother.

"It may be our own!" said Edward, as he pushed the

horse forward along the road, and breasted the hill toward the sea.

A month or so later, Henry Liston, who had quite forgotten all about the play, other more serious things engrossing him, strolled in on business to the local shoemaker, named Cupps, who also filled the office of sexton and bell-ringer to the Protestant church.

After the interchange of a few words, and the transaction of a little business, Cupps, looking up from his work, said slyly:

"That was a grand play ye had up at the school a few weeks ago, sir!"

"It was!" said Henry, carelessly.

"It must have cost a power and all of money to bring down all them grand clothes and wigs and swords from Cork," said Cupps, hammering away at the boot in his lap.

"So it did," said Henry. "There was little left for charity, I promise you!"

Cupps hammered away furiously for a few seconds. Then suddenly stopping, he looked up, and said:

"A quare thing happened the next morning, your reverence; but I haven't tould a mother's sowl about it."

He stopped for dramatic effect, and then continued:

"Whin I opened the vesthry window that morning, the fust thing I see was the diamond panes of glass broken; and a jackdaw lying dead on the floor."

A light was breaking in on Henry's mind, but he said nothing.

"Now, in all honesty, yer reverence," asked the cobbler, "do you believe that a jackdaw could, or would, dash himself against a leaded window, and break through it, killing himself?"

"Well, I suppose, that would depend on the force with which he flew," said Henry.

The cobbler beat round the soles of the boot rapidly. Then, he said jerkily:

"Another quare thing I found that morning, yer reverence. The Archdayken's surplice, which was as clane as a pin on Sunday morning, was that morning as dirty as if a tramp had slept in it. Wasn't that quare now, your reverence?"

And he looked up at the priest with a meaning smile.

"It was; very strange, indeed!" quoth Henry.

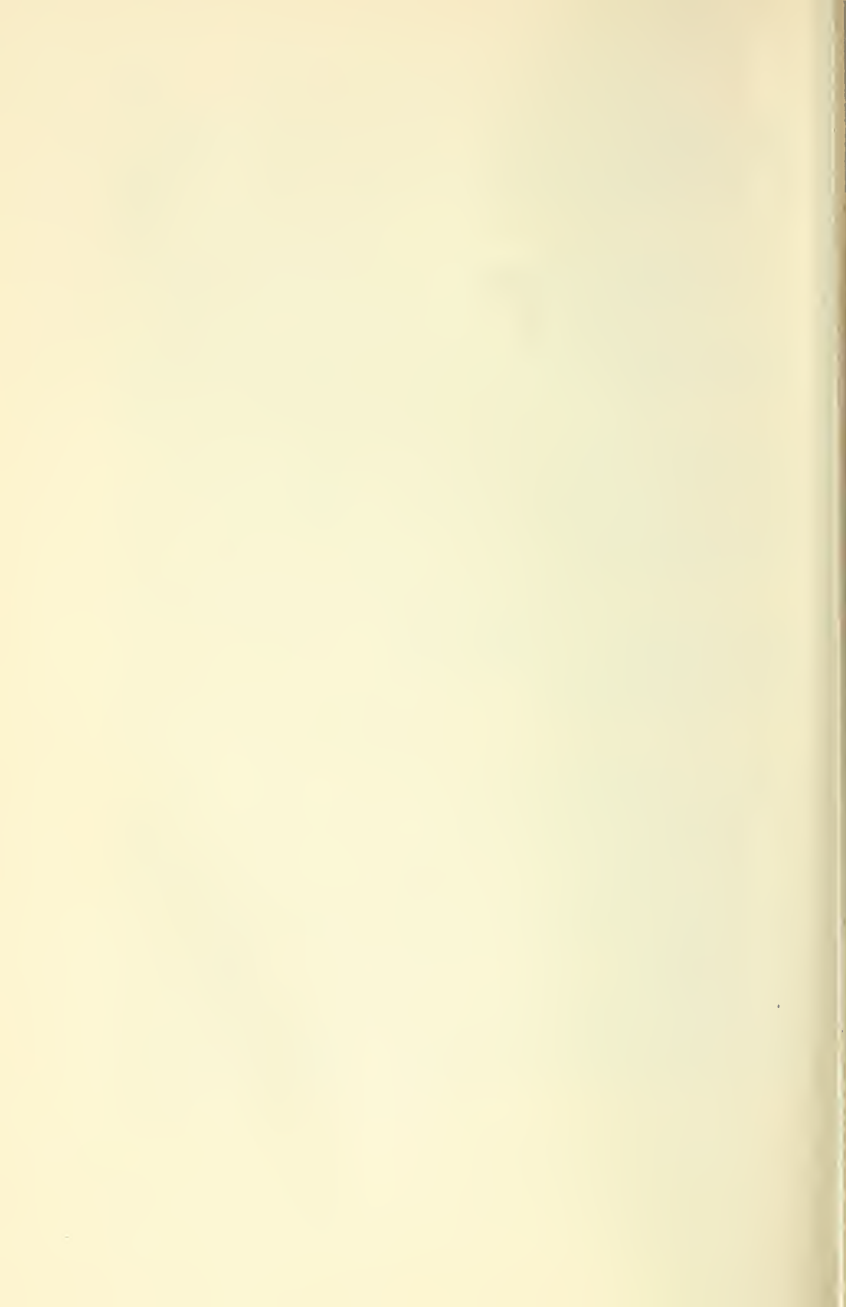
And the cobbler seemed now to beat in the wooden rivets and iron tacks as furiously as if he were in a passion. But no! he was only dramatizing a little. Then he suddenly stopped; and looking up again, he said:

"And the quarest thing of all is this, yer reverence. I don't know what the Archdayken drinks at home. It may be champagne, or it may be soda-water. But this I can take my Bible oath upon — that, at least, whin he's conducting divine service, he's not in the habit of spilling bottled porter over his clothes."

"I should say not, indeed," said Henry Liston, with a gaiety he didn't feel. He didn't know what this church official, with the knowledge he certainly possessed of the midnight raid upon the vestry, was going to do. The latter, however, explained.

"But, mum's the word," yer reverence. "I don't want to see thim poor fools sent to gaol for six months. But it was fortunate for them the thing occurred in the beginning of the week; and not of a Saturday night. I had the whole thing spick and span by Sunday morning. 'I'm afraid, Cupps,' said the Archdayken, 'that you get my surplice washed too often.' He was rubbing his chin and smiling. I knew what he meant. 'The claner and whiter they are, sir,' sez I, 'the more they'll frighten the ghosts away. An' I'm towld that a ghost has been seen around here lately.' 'So I heard, Cupps,' sez he. And there'll be no more about it!"

BOOK II



CHAPTER XXV

PARTINGS

YEARS had rolled by over the heads of our actors in this little drama — years, leaden-footed to the young, swift to the old. And they brought with them many changes, for good or ill, for the years are impartial, and they drop snowflakes or fireflakes at will on the heads over which they pass in their flight to eternity.

All our younger friends had left the parish, and changed the *venue* of life elsewhere. The old had struck their roots too deeply to bear transplanting.

Mary Liston had entered, not the Convent of the teaching order, where she had been educated, but one of the strictest and most austere observance in the Church — that of the Poor Clares, or Collettines. The reason for the change originated in a casual conversation which she had, a few days before she left her brother's house, with Nance, the poor girl who earned her livelihood by washing in the diamond-paned cottage at the corner of the road which led from Lackagh to the parish priest's house. A slight acquaintance had sprung up between them; and Mary Liston had visited the cottage a few times, attracted thither by the strange supernatural atmosphere of the place — the realization and bringing down into daily life of the Unseen Powers, that from their hidden habitation amongst us seem to hold their hands on the pulse of all things that breathe and move. This sense of the supernatural breathed from every object in the humble cabin; and it was so intimate that the girl expressed her surprise that Miss Liston should suppose it unusual.

"Lonesome, Miss? Yerra, no! I'm never lonesome here. I keeps the best of company. Whin I'm pounding and washing and beetling and mangling these clothes, I do be thinking all the time of how the Blessed Virgin did the same for Jesus and Joseph. An' I imagines her to be here near me, both of us working together; and I do be talkin' to her; and she to me. And sometimes I axes her all about her Divine Son; and she ups and tells me everything — what He wears, and what He eats and drinks; and where she gets things for the house; an' how she manages the poor wages St. Joseph airns. And thin, whin she goes away, I talks to the Lord over there on His cross, and I tells Him all I thinks and feels about His sufferings and death, until the big lump comes into me throat, and I haves to shtop. And thin, I takes to singing ould tunes and hymns my grandmother taught me — wild ould Irish songs, in which the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation, and everythin' is mixed up together, ontill I gets so happy an' joyful, that I do be jumpin' out of me skin."

"Then," said Mary Liston, "you're never sad, nor sorrowful, nor wishing to be something else than what you are?"

"Yerra, God bless you, no, Miss!" said the girl. "I don't know what it is to be sorrowful. I was a bit lonesome whin me ould grandmother wint away from me; but that's all passed and gone. I know she's in heaven, altho' I still get Masses and prayers said for her. But, I'm not a bit sad nor sorrowful now. How could I be, when I have Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, wid me? And look, Miss! all them Saints comes out of their pictures and talks to me; and sometimes, whin I go to bed at wan or two in the mornin', I can't sleep I'm so full of joy, and me heart is big enough to break in bits."

"But, you have a hard life," said Miss Liston. "Up in the dark of the morning, working all day in soap-suds and a steamy atmosphere, and all nearly for nothing, for I have heard you are poorly paid."

"As to gettin' up in the mornin'," said the poor girl, "that's aisy enough, whin you want to get back amongst all that's holy and good; and as for workin' all day, I don't mind it. It would be much harder to be sittin' down on that sugan chair, idle and lazy. And as for the pay, sure I haves enough; an I sez to meself that I am richer than the Blessed Virgin, for I have only wan mouth to feed; and she had three, blessed be their holy names!"

"But, then, you must be sometimes fagged out and tired," persisted Miss Liston, who was struck by this picture of transcendent piety in such a place, "and you must long to lie down and be at rest, and give up work altogether?"

"Yerra, God bless you, no, Miss!" was the reply. "Whin I am tired, I just thinks of our Lord carrying His cross to Calvary; and it gives me new strinth. Whin I wants to lie down, I sez to meself, Ha! if you had the hard bed of the cross to lie upon, you wouldn't be in such a hurry, me lady! Or, if your two hands and feet were gripped in the cowl'd, hard nails, that were rusting with your blood, you wouldn't mind the hot wather and the soda that blisters 'em now. Ah, no, Miss, whin we think of all that was done and suffered for us, it's aisy to bear our own little thrills — av coorse, with the help of Him who sinds them."

Now, all this made Mary Liston reflect; and some holy books that ever lay on her dressing-table seemed to repeat in better language the words of this poor girl. And then Mary Liston began to pray — that is, to pray in earnest — not *to say* her prayers only. And gradually a new light began to creep into her life, and a strange, weird sense of a world beyond the world of time and sense began to dawn on her startled mind. She now became afraid. She was at the parting of the ways. She had gone too far to go back; and yet she feared to go forward, for there she knew were desolation and trial, before she could emerge into the peace and joy that surpasseth

understanding. It was the ordeal through which every select soul must pass that is called to the higher life—the skirting of the howling valleys of desolation before emerging into the sunlight of the beckoning hills. But she persevered; and in silence. Never a word did she speak to her mother or even to her brother about the call and the consequences. Only they noticed that she had grown paler and thinner, and more reserved, though not less cheerful. Some said it was the exercise of cycling which was settling her features in such lines of hardness and strength. Some said it was the sea-air. But she went her way in a silence broken only by her conferences with Nance. Then, one day, she got permission to attend a retreat for ladies at a certain city convent. There she decided that her vocation was not for a life of teaching or nursing or visiting; but for a life of contemplation and prayer, broken only by the austerities of the severest order in the Church.

Strange to say she received no opposition except in one quarter, and that the least expected. Her home friends assented in unquestioning silence. They knew nothing about such things. They only knew that her Director had bidden her thither, and she should obey the call. Her brother offered no opposition. His heart sank somewhat when he thought of his little sister walking the flagged or tiled corridors of the convent in bare feet; or rising at midnight with the sleep still heavy on her eyelids to go down to the cold dark choir for two or three hours; or ringing the alms-bell, when she and her religious sisters were actually hungry. But he had too deep a sense of the supernatural to oppose the manifest will of God. He only questioned his sister as to whether she quite understood and realized the austerities she was about to face. And when she had answered that she had measured and weighed them all and her own strength and endurance, he said: “God’s will be done!” But the very day she entered religion, he quietly sold all his silver, and evermore tried to imitate her although afar off.

But Annie O'Farrell was furious. That is the only word, I think, that will express her indignation and grief at her young friend's resolution. Somehow, probably in the absence of other friends, and in the soft heat of youthful enthusiasm, she had grown into a singular unity of thought and purpose with Mary Liston. Their ideas, sentiments, longings seemed to harmonize in such completeness that no room was left for doubt or distrust. And Annie O'Farrell, though of a strong nature, still felt a new zest in life, because she had a friend, not so much to lean upon, as to share her inmost thoughts, and become the partner of all her future hopes and ambitions. And now, here is the friend ruthlessly torn from her side by a fanatical idea; and so unexpectedly that Annie refused to believe it until she heard it from her own lips. It was at Father Liston's house.

"This is not true, Mary Liston," she said in an aggrieved tone. "Father Liston has told me that you are about to become a Collettine, or something else of that kind; but although he is a priest, I refuse to believe it. Say it is not true!"

"But it is, Annie," said Miss Liston. "I shall wait for a few weeks longer to make some preparations; and then I depart. Ah, if you could only come also!"

"Me?" said Annie, shocked and angry. "God forbid that I should bury myself in a tomb for the rest of my life."

"Sometimes flowers grow even in tombs," said her friend laughing, yet with a certain sadness in her voice.

"It is sheer nonsense — sheer, downright, stark madness," said Annie. "I'm amazed that Father Liston could tolerate the idea for a moment. I knew always you'd be a nun. Something told me of it. But then I hoped you would join a high-class teaching order, where you would have all the refinements and advantages of life and yet do good — real, positive good in educating young girls decently. But to bury yourself in a hole, where you will be half-starved and perished with cold

and hunger, and where you can never be of any use to man or mortal — I say, Mary, you'll never stand it — not for a week, mark my words. And then out you'll come; and the whole world will be laughing at you."

Here Henry Liston entered. Annie turned to him.

"Father Liston," she said, "how can you entertain for a moment the idea of allowing Mary to enter that horrible hole of a convent? Don't you know, as well as I do, that she won't stand it for a week? For God's sake, stop it now, before it becomes too late. You know, if Mary enters, her pride will keep her from returning, even though she knows her life will be a purgatory. I can't understand why you should allow it. And I can't understand why the Church should tolerate such useless and cruel institutions here in the end of the nineteenth century."

So she argued, reasoned, pleaded with all the eloquence of a love that was being broken into pieces by such severance. But it was of no use. Mary Liston smiled at her friend's extravagance. Father Liston said nothing. He went about, sad and resigned to the inevitable.

Annie broached the matter to her uncle. She argued, pleaded, expostulated, in the hope that he would interfere. But here she was met by a wall of adamant.

"It is the Law!" he said.

"What Law?" she cried. "What Law can bind a young girl, in all the freshness and sweetness of her youth, to bury herself in a hole, to wear coarse flannels, to eat coarse food which she begs, to get up in the middle of the night and go down into a cold chapel — ugh! And, worse than all, to lead a lazy, useless life, neither good for king nor country?"

"A lazy, useless life?" he muttered severely. "A lazy, useless life? What are you speaking of, Annie? Or, do you quite understand what you mean?"

"Perfectly," she replied, although she was afraid she had gone too far. "It is a lazy, useless life to do nothing but meditate and pray, and — fast."

"What would you, in your great wisdom, substitute for prayer?" he asked.

"Why, work — work of some kind, teaching, tending the sick, making girls useful, and so on."

"But prayer is work!" he said, so gently now that Annie did not see how she was betraying herself.

"Prayer — work? Surely, Uncle, you're mistaken. Prayer — work? Who ever heard the like?"

"Try it for one hour," he said, "for one half-hour; and you'll be glad to get back to your needle."

The experiment was not needed. She admitted the fact.

"But, then it is useless — I mean, one cannot see the utility of it, like teaching, or nursing?"

"Of course," he replied. "These are the stock arguments of modern irreligion. Everything now must show itself in order to be recognized. Men will believe only what they see. And yet," he continued, in a musing manner, "they might see the magnificent, the unspeakable power of prayer, if they would but open their foolish eyes to see. But no, the animal sees but the fodder beneath its mouth; and the world will persist in looking at things in a bovine manner forever. But to the eyes of faith, what daily, hourly miracles are wrought by prayer! But there, I'm speaking to a nineteenth-century, up-to-date, *fin-de-siècle* young Yank; and she cannot understand."

"No! indeed," said Annie, taking courage from the kindly bantering. "All I can tell you, Uncle, is this. America is to be the right-hand of the Church in the immediate future. That's settled. When all your old, outworn, old Churches are gone to pieces, America will be the young athlete of Catholicity. But, we won't stand any nonsense, mind you, over there! No old Middle-Age institutions, with their hair-cloths, and chains, and fastings; but useful, educational institutions for the young and brave Americans —"

"Oh, for God's sake, stop that, Annie," he cried in dismay.

She burst out laughing.

"Ah! there it is," she said. "No use trying to open up your old world to see what the future is bringing. But say, Uncle. You said, in speaking of Mary, that she had to go. It is the Law! What law? Where is the law that can bind a young girl to give up her youth, and loveliness, and hope, to bury herself in a living tomb? I don't believe God ever made such a law as that."

"Go and say your prayers, child," he said. "Learn to pray! All the eloquence of the world wouldn't make it clear to you now. It is speaking of colour to a blind person. Pity that Miss Liston is going so soon. She would teach you a good deal, Annie."

He paused, as if thinking. Then he went on:

"Yes! she would teach you a good deal — a good deal that cannot be learned now except by the way of tears."

At which Annie marvelled a little; but only a little.

Only a little! Because she had already experienced what it is to pass under the hands of the taskmaster who demands his fees in tears. That word, that quotation of four lines from "Hamlet," which Edward Wycherly had whispered to her on the side-car the night she drove with him from the school-house had smitten her with terror and shame such as she had never known before. A sudden blow on the face to a strong man is not more of a surprise and insult than an indelicate word uttered in the ear of a pure-minded girl. And when Annie O'Farrell, hastily descending from the side-car, abruptly, too, without a word of thanks or farewell, sought her room, it was with a sense of insult and shame, that made her eyes dilate and one hot blush after another mount to her neck and face. She felt, as she afterwards described it, as if some loathsome and fetid fluid had been flung upon her, and had saturated her garments, and could not be removed by any manner of chemical. It was a hot head that pressed the pillow that night; and the pillow was wet with tears.

When the morning came, however, it was not a girl,

gentle and joyful, that arose to face the labours of the day; but a woman, strong and determined and angry with herself and the world. There was a sense of shame surrounding her that gave her unusual fortitude. She had tasted of the bitter tree of knowledge of good and evil; and, although she felt and knew that her conscience could not upbraid her, and that she was as innocent as on the morning of her first communion, she also felt that she had been initiated into the mystery of mysteries — the iniquity that covers and encompasses the earth. And a grave, solemn silence seemed to come down upon her life; and when she spoke, it was with the assurance of womanhood, and not the timidity of a girl. Her whole character was stricken into precocity by one word, just as one word sometimes reveals vice or genius.

Her uncle supposed that it was a sense of loneliness and sorrow after her companion that weighed on her spirits; and he strove to reason with her. Then one day she revealed her intention of going away, and preparing for life in some independent fashion. He was alarmed and angry. He then felt how much she had grown into his life. He then pleaded his growing infirmity.

"I had hoped," he said, "that you would stay with me unto the end. Annie, you know what I anticipate, partial if not utter blindness. That will be dreadful if you abandon me. I shall go mad if I have no one to read to me; to speak to me."

But he did not know that the strength and stubbornness of his own character was reflected in that of his niece. She shook her head. He then decided that she was cold and selfish.

"Of course, it is your American training," he said, with bitterness. "Everyone for herself there! Very good! I cannot prevent you!"

"But, Uncle," she said, "you don't, you cannot understand. Oh! It is so hard to explain. Believe me, I am not ungrateful nor indifferent to you. But —"

He was silent.

"I *must* go. Indeed, I must. I am not tired of Doon-varragh; and I don't want to see the world; and I am not ungrateful. Oh, Uncle dear, don't think so! Perhaps, one day, I'll explain. But I must go!"

"Very well!" he said, coldly.

"But I'll come back on all my holidays, and this will always be my home — that is, if you allow me. Say you will, dear Uncle. Say, 'Come back, whenever you like. This will always be your home, Annie.'"

"Well," he said, "you're an ungrateful hussy. But, I suppose, I can't turn you out, if you care to come."

"Oh, oh! That won't do at all, at all! Say, 'Annie, you go with my blessing, and with my full free will and consent. And you're always to come back here when you are disposed, or I need you. And when I'm very old, you shall come back altogether to nurse me; and —'"

So there were pleadings and counterpleadings between two strong spirits for many months, nature and habit struggling with the strong man to retain the companionship of his niece; instinct and an undefinable desire to flee from danger prevailing with his niece. Then, one day, wearied by her importunity, he said to her:

"There now, there now! Go, child, in God's name! I'm not going to set my face against Providence. And perhaps, after all, you are right, and it is for the best. When we are nearing eternity, it is foolish to entangle ourselves in human ties."

It was not very soothing; but Annie had her way. And hence, some years have elapsed, and Mary Liston, long since professed, is treading the flagged corridors of her convent with bare or sandalled feet; and her little friend, Annie, is a qualified surgical nurse in the wards of a city hospital.

CHAPTER XXVI

AND PROPHECIES

ONE evening in the October of this year, Judith sat on a hillock, clothed with the beautiful sea-thistle far down on the yellow sands of the little bay inside the fiord that ran up into the land beneath Dunkerrin Castle. She swept the sea-horizon from time to time with her keen eye; but neither ship, nor boat, nor yacht was visible. She muttered some expressions of impatience; and began to croon some old Romany song, and mark some figures on the sands, as if she were weaving spells for an enemy. It was a lovely, calm evening with a hush upon all things, except where the tide washed up and broke upon the sands, and troubled here and there a tiny shell or pebble. The solemn gray of October hung over sky and rock and sea; and made all things grave and sedate, even the gulls and sea-larks, that ceased their cries as they poised themselves over the still deep, or scampered in and out, as the tide washed clean on the sands, and the worms pushed up their little globules and hillocks of soft sand as the tide receded. It was a time and season that moved to meditation, or that most supreme self-engrossment which we call sleep; and perhaps Judith had gone into the Land of Dreams when Edward Wycherly, after running out the anchor of his yacht in the soft sands near the shore, shot his little punt high up on the shelving beach. He stepped lightly ashore and, standing silent for a few minutes over the silent woman, he said:

"I thought the devil never slept, nor his children."

"There is sleep and sleep," she said without lifting her head or betraying the slightest sign of surprise or emotion.

"There are those who see less with their eyes open than Judith sees in her dreams."

"Good again!" said Wycherly, smiling pitifully at her. "Now what are you going to prophesy? Is there a fair-haired woman coming over the sea?"

"No!" she said slowly, still drawing lines on the sand. "But a black hawk sits on a rock and he is still watching the dove. He'll never strike his quarry; nor ever return to his nest."

Wycherly saw the allusion and his brow darkened.

"Speak plainly," he said, angrily. "These things are for the firesides of peasants."

"He stood lightly enough on my lady's wrist," she replied, "whilst he was leashed and hooded. But he hath seen the white dove and he has drawn higher and higher circles in the heavens to make her his prey."

"If you mean that any of these poor peasants is in danger," he said, "go tell the priests."

"Eagles don't catch flies!" she said.

"You don't like the priests, Judith?" he answered by way of interrogation.

"I don't dislike them," she said. "I tolerate them."

"Complimentary to the cloth," he said. "It is a good joke. I must remember it."

"All the strong ones of the earth hate them," she continued. "All the weak things of the earth lean on and love them. You and I are strong, therefore —"

"Who is the black hawk, Judith?" he said in a bland and coaxing manner.

She raised her hand and, pointing her long forefinger to the west, where the coast bent round and sheltered far away the Coast Guard Station, she said:

"Don't heed the dove, but mind the nest," she replied. "I see far off and behind the future, desolation after desolation. And then, from behind a blood-red cloud and a blinded sun, I see the dove return and settle here forever."

"Happy dove!" he said laughingly. "But now we'll

drop the Sybil, if you please, and come to business. Have you or Pete heard anything from yonder?"

And he nodded toward the west where the Coast Guard Station lay.

"No!" she said languidly. "Have you?"

"I have heard nothing," he said, "but I know something. There's a traitor somewhere. We have to be careful now, or all is lost."

"You have been talking that way for four years, Edward Wycherly," she said, "ever since the day you came hither from your ship. Men with scorched hands shouldn't play with fire."

"You mean I'm a coward," he said, his face darkening in the twilight. "You're wrong. If I cared to tell, I could prove it to you. But, just now, I have everything to gain, and everything to lose; and one needs caution."

"You must remember," she said, "Edward Wycherly, that you came into this business on your own invitation. We didn't ask you to join us. Nay, if you remember rightly, we were somewhat reluctant about it; and you resented this, and — you threatened!"

He knew the allusion, and blushed beneath his sallow skin.

"You threatened," she continued, "— you remember what you threatened. If there be a traitor, let him be judged out of his own mouth."

"There, Judith," he said. "I didn't want to offend you. You know that; but your southern blood is hasty. But you know how I stand now. The fact is, I am anxious to get out of this business. 'Tis dangerous. You and Pete have nothing to lose; I, everything. Just now, my father is tottering into his grave; and all this," he swept his hand backward, "is mine. My name is already gone before the Lord Lieutenant of the County for the Commission of the Peace; and I want to settle down —"

"And bring the white dove hither," she interrupted. "A pretty programme, Edward Wycherly; but there's many a pretty plan foiled in the working."

"I know that!" he said, furtively looking at the sinister face of the woman. "And hence I want a fair field. I want to remove the obstructions, one by one. And then, you know, Judith, it will be all the better for you and Pete. You, too, are running risks; and, after all, the old castle is more comfortable than the County Gaol. Let us clear this cargo, bury the past, and settle down to a decent and lawful life. You and Pete may be sure, you can trust me!"

She seemed to ponder earnestly over the question, still drawing lines on the sands. Then, raising her head, she looked him full in the face, and said:

"Settle your affairs with Pete, Edward Wycherly. A woman's brains are no match for yours."

"Your brains are more than a match for any man's," he replied. "But there is no question in dispute between us. It simply amounts to this. We have been running risks for some profits. If, as I suspect, the authorities have got wind of it, they will watch and search; and, even though we may foil them for a time, they will succeed in the end. That means ruin."

"Of course," she said drily.

"Then, is it not better to suspend operations? I can make up the loss to Pete."

"How?" she asked.

"Well, you see," he answered with some reluctance, "there are many ways. Pete can get constant employment on the property. We can get Cora into the house—that is, if she and you care. And you can always have a home here."

"One would like—I mean Pete would like a little better security," she replied.

"Then," he went on, apparently not noticing the remark, "old Kerins can't stand. He's drinking too hard. Poor devil, he's driven to it, and no wonder. No man could go around, day by day, carrying his life in his hand without taking to drink. He's an awful fool not to sell out and clear off to America."

"But you were saying," she persisted, "that old Kerins can't stand. What then?"

"Well, then," he said uneasily, "you know the Duggans have no chance. They cannot buy the place at his price. Someone else will offer —"

"Who?" she asked, studying his features closely.

"Well, Pete has saved enough now by — by — this business to offer a good price."

"And settle down into a Gorgio farmer?" she said, laughing. "Not likely, Edward Wycherly. Think of some other bribe, and offer it at your leisure — at your leisure," she repeated, "to the little father."

He ground his teeth and walked away sullenly, cursing the old "catamount" and — himself for having been betrayed by the lust of wealth into courses that brought him within the law, and within the terrible power of these uncanny heathens, who, he knew, would sacrifice him at a word to save themselves. How often he wished now that he had cleared out this gypsy family from the old castle; and how often he regretted the steady opposition to the parish priest he had inculcated by word and example amongst the rebellious and disaffected in the district. It seemed too late now, unless in some mysterious manner the Fates came to his aid.

He entered the mansion, now practically his own, with a heavy heart. The dinner bell was rung; but he seemed not to hear it. The old servitor, clad in a suit of faded black, had to knock at his bedroom door and tell him that the doctor was already at the dinner-table. He dressed hastily and came down.

He thought the dining-room never looked so gloomy. The darkened panels and ceiling seemed black as a funeral pall; the silver glinted and shone; but its very massiveness seemed to weigh upon his spirits. The cloth was covered with bunches and sprays of early chrysanthemums in all their varied and flaming colours; but just then they seemed to mock him with their fragile beauty. It was a frugal dinner, as the old doctor's tastes were simple —

a little soup, served in a silver tureen, a dish of steak and several dishes of vegetables. Then came piles of rich autumnal fruit from their own gardens and hothouses; and biscuits with little flakes of cheese and butter lay on highly-decorated china, old and cracked, but valuable to the eye of a connoisseur.

Edward Wycherly took a pear and ate it hastily. Then he swallowed in single gulps two glasses of wine.

His father pushed away his plate and said softly:

"Strange I haven't heard from Dion for ever so long. He wrote punctually the first weeks he was at sea; but not a note has come for months. I fear some trouble. And — his mother came to me in my dreams last night."

"I think you needn't be troubled, sir," said his son. "His ship, I think, has gone round the Horn, where it is always blowing big guns; and probably he won't touch at port, nor have a chance of posting a letter till he gets to 'Frisco."

"I don't know," said his father uneasily, "I have got some presentiment about the boy. And then — his mother came to me in sleep last night!"

"I remember," said Edward Wycherly, "when I was rounding the Cape in the *Nevada*, we had to lay to for days, keeping her head to the seas. There was no going forward in the teeth of a head-wind. I think that run took a good six months."

"I don't know," said the father dreamily, "I cannot shake off some sense of danger. It is strange that I shall not spend my old age in peace. Doesn't a man deserve peace in his declining years?"

"Of course, sir," replied his son. "And I think you are needlessly troubled. You may be sure Dion is all right. And then, he's a hardy chap."

"Ah, yes! no fear there," said his father in the same moody manner. "No fear there! Poor Jack is the one to fear there. I was hoping that all would be right. But his mother came to me in sleep last night!"

Edward Wycherly was so utterly depressed by his

own thoughts and by the lugubrious laments and forebodings of his father that he felt he could bear it no longer. But he thought it was his duty to say some strengthening words to his father.

"You shouldn't be needlessly fretting, sir," he said. "There's no fear of Jack. A year or two more and he'll have his degree and then he can look around."

Dr. Wycherly reached to the mantelpiece and took down a letter in the same dreamy, listless manner that characterized all his actions.

"Here is a letter that came this morning," he said, opening it and reading: 'A dear friend would advise Doctor Wycherly to remove his son from the city immediately. He can complete his studies elsewhere. This place is not the best suited to the interests of mind or body.'

He handed the note to Edward. It was written in a disguised hand and was, of course, unsigned.

"Some fellow," he said, tossing it back, "who wants to get Jack out of his way for the half-yearly exam. It is quite enough that the letter is anonymous."

"Quite so!" said Dr. Wycherly, taking back the letter and folding it. "But his mother came to me in my dreams last night!"

"I'm not much of a preacher or a consoler," said his son, "but I have often heard it said that the worst misfortunes are those that never happen, and that it is always foolish to anticipate evils. Now, as you have said, you have a right to peace after your long and laborious life. Where's the use then in fretting about fanciful troubles?"

He had a keen underthought that his own substantial troubles might very soon come to the front.

"All that you say is true," said his father in the same lugubrious manner. "But 'coming events cast their shadows before.' And I cannot shake off the impression. *Your* mother came to me in my dreams last night!"

Edward Wycherly was silent. He could not argue further. Then he rose and went out.

He had not gone far in front of the house when he heard a long low whistle. He knew what it meant. He passed beyond the precincts of the house, and Pete leaped lightly over the ditch.

"The lugger is in the offing," he whispered. "We have no time to lose."

"All right!" said Edward Wycherly in a tone of despair. "Was your mother speaking to you of our conversation?"

"No!" said the little father in a tone of surprise. "Shall we take the yacht or the boat?"

"How goes the wind?"

"In the right quarter, blowing gently off the land."

"How will the night be?"

"Dark as hell. The quarter moon has sunk in the sea."

"All right. Get ready the yacht and I shall be with you at the creek."

He turned away, but he had gone only a short distance when he called after Pete.

The little father came up wondering.

"Never mind!" said Edward Wycherly. "Have all things ready in the punt and I shall presently be with you."

CHAPTER XXVII

A STERN CHASE

CAPTAIN NESBIT, Chief Coast Guard Officer and Inspector, sat on a wicker chair outside the white wall that surrounded the Coast Guard Station. This was his fourth visit within a few months. He was much disturbed in mind this evening. He indicated it by biting his nails and looking anxiously and angrily across the heaving waters. The truth was that he had been reprimanded severely from headquarters. He had been sent down to ferret out and destroy a nest of smugglers that were hidden somewhere along the western coast, and he had ignominiously failed. Every effort had been thwarted, and he had long since fallen back on the belief that the authorities had been hoaxed. In this view he was confirmed by the belief of his men, who assured him that the thing was quite impossible in these days of vigilance and circumspection, when the whole coast from station to station could be swept by the long glasses of the men; and when a diver could not cross the horizon without being noticed. But here were his peremptory orders. Clearly, the revenue authorities believed that something illegal was in progress, and he it was who should seek it out and destroy it.

He lit a cigarette just as the dusk of evening fell and, after a few minutes' reflection, he called over Pelham, a shrewd, cautious Englishman who had been warrant-officer in the service and who was now in charge of the station.

"Any news, Pelham?" he asked anxiously.

"None, sir!" said Pelham, saluting.

"Were the men out last night?"

"Yes, sir. I myself was in charge."

"How far did you go?"

"Six miles to the west, where we ambushed in a creek. Then we pulled out to sea and skirted the coast down to Redcarn."

"And saw nothing?"

"Not a sail, nor an oar, sir, except Mr. Wycherly's *Water-Witch*."

"You didn't follow her?"

"No, sir," said Pelham, looking with surprise at his officer. "Mr. Wycherly, sir, is the young gentleman at Rohira — an ex-naval hofferer."

Nesbit was silent. He thought long and earnestly.

"We have swept every inch of the coast," he said at length, "up from Waterford, and down again from Kinsale. If there's anything wrong, I don't see how it could have escaped us. But — can that boat well carry a sail?"

"Yes, sir, if we manage careful and the wind lies low."

"All right. When does the moon set?"

"Sets early, sir. It will be pitch-dark at ten."

"So much the better. Have the boat and four men ready at half-past nine. And bring your arms."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Pelham, saluting. But he lingered round.

"Any suggestions, Pelham?" the officer asked, noticing his hesitation.

"No, sir! But that gypsy woman comes around here pretty often; and I don't like her tampering with the men and fooling the women."

"Certainly not," said Captain Nesbit. "You must sternly forbid her coming near the station again. When was she here last?"

"I think she was here this hafternoon, sir," said Pelham.

"Is this one of the gypsies at the castle?"

"Yes, sir. You remember me telling you about them at your last inspection?"

"Yes, I do," said the officer, reflecting. "Has that apparition been seen since?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" said the man. "It is quite a usual thing, especially on moonlight nights!"

"And you think still that these people get out this property-ghost to please the old doctor?"

"I do, sir," said Pelham. "The men don't."

"Then they believe it is a real ghost?" he asked in amazement.

"Some do, sir, and they are thoroughly frightened. Some are doubtful. I tells them that these gypsies are simply trying to please the old man, so that he may not disturb them. The young master wanted to clear them out long ago, but the doctor would not allow him."

"What? Do you mean that Mr. Wycherly was anxious to remove these people? Have you heard that?"

"Yes, sir. Judith has mentioned it again and again to our people. And she says they can defy him, so long as the old master lives."

"Another theory knocked on the head," muttered Nesbit to himself. "All right, Pelham. I'll have some tea at nine o'clock, and have the men ready as I've said."

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Pelham, saluting and entering the station again.

When the moon had set, the men got out their long boat and pulled silently into the deep. Outside the shelter of the land, when the light wind caught them, they hoisted a sail and moved noiselessly in a direct line southward from the shore. Nesbit steered. They carried no lights, but a dark lantern was hidden beneath the seats. When they had sailed three or four miles from shore, they veered round and, altering their course, sailed in an easterly direction and almost parallel with the coast. The men kept a good lookout; but it was weary work and waiting; and after a time they lowered the sail and lay to. It might have been an hour from midnight when the lookout whispered:

"A sail to the windward, sir! Keep her helm steady!"

And Nesbit had hardly time to grip the rudder-ropes when the full wing of the *Water-Witch* swept within a few yards of the coast guard boat and vanished in the darkness, leaving a white wake behind. "Hoist the sail at once, Pelham," shouted Nesbit, "and after her. By Jove, that was a close shave. Keep in her wake and tack if you come too near!"

"'Tis the *Water-Witch*, sir — Mr. Wycherly's boat," said Pelham.

"How do you know?" said Nesbit, somewhat impatiently.

"By the cut of her sail, sir!" the man answered. "I'm sure 'tis the *Water-Witch*. Isn't it, Orpen?"

"I think so," said one of the men, who was pulling the sail-ropes through their pulleys. "There's no other yacht around here, except Wycherly's."

"Never mind!" said Nesbit. "Keep after her. If we can overhaul her, no harm's done!"

Then commenced a race upon the midnight waters; and there was no rivalry, only the anger of the pursued and the zeal of the pursuers. For Edward Wycherly felt now that the authority of England was on his track, and he shook out every bit of canvas his little yacht could bear until her pennant almost dipped in the seas. He guessed at once why and wherefore he was pursued; and he determined to give them a night of it. "But a last night," he muttered so that Pete could not hear him. There was a faint starlight on the waters; and far down in the west a reflection from the sunken moon. Now and again Nesbit could see the white swallow-wing flashing in the darkness; and Wycherly watched the broad sail that came lumbering along in his wake. But it was swan against swallow. The *Water-Witch* sprang, as if to the voice of her master, over the curdling waves, and down dark hollows; and in less than half an hour she was beyond the sight or reach of her pursuers. She was then far out at sea; and a great dark object loomed up on her

lee side and a flash, so faint that only expectant eyes could see it, lit up the waters for a moment. Wycherly put down his helm and glided under her stern; and answered in reply to a muffled "Boat ahoy!":

"Quick! Put her round and hoist every stitch of canvas. The coast guards are at hand!"

He made the circuit of the schooner repeating his orders and then flew back to where the coast guard boat was still lumbering through the waves, drew it completely out of the track of the smuggler and into his own creek beneath Dunkerrin Castle, pulled down his sail, got Pete out in the punt, and awaited events.

Nesbit in the eagerness of his pursuit, and forgetting altogether that he was only acting upon suspicion, almost ran his boat upon the rocks. Yet he dreaded from lack of power or lack of evidence to proceed further. Wycherly challenged:

"That you, Pelham?"

"Yes, sir!" said Pelham. "Captain Nesbit is on board."

"You have had a hard run. Did you take me for a smuggler?"

"No, sir. But —"

Here he seemed to consult his officer.

"Mr. Nesbit, sir, would like to know what you were doing out on the deep seas at such an hour."

"Tell Mr. Nesbit that that is my own affair. I shall go and come upon the high seas at my pleasure."

"Oh, of course, sir! Meant no offence, sir, I'm sure."

But Nesbit had drawn in his boat till she glided almost stern to stern with the yacht; and with the dark lantern he threw a yellow glare across the deck of the boat. It revealed nothing. But Wycherly affected the fury of insulted innocence.

"If you are not satisfied, sir," he said, glowering down upon Nesbit, "with your most impertinent examination of my boat, you are at liberty to come aboard. And, if you are not satisfied with that, you can bring

your men up to my father's house and pursue your investigations there."

"You have been an officer, Mr. Wycherly," said Nesbit, half ashamed but yet suspicious, "and you know that an officer has duties to perform which are sometimes unpleasant."

"Quite so!" said Wycherly, seeing that he had now the victory. "It is because I recognize the call of duty that I invite you to a further search, so that you should be perfectly satisfied."

"It is late!" said Nesbit, consulting his watch, but still eagerly scanning every corner of the yacht under the yellow glare of the lantern. "And besides, no suspicion can attach to you, Mr. Wycherly. In fact, I should be disposed to call upon you to help in our search for smugglers along this coast."

"Then you believe that smuggling is going on?" asked Wycherly.

"Well, so it is reported," said Nesbit. "But perhaps I could see you again at a more opportune time and we could discuss the matter together."

"Certainly! I shall be most happy," said Wycherly. "Meanwhile, you will allow me to throw out my anchor. There!"

"Well, good night!" said Nesbit. "And a more pleasant introduction next time."

And the boat swung round under the strong arms of the men and vanished in the darkness.

In a few seconds the little punt, guided by Pete, glided out and ran alongside the yacht, and the two men stepped ashore. Pete remained behind, tying up the boat; but Wycherly went forward and strode into the Witch's cave.

A dark lantern was faintly smoking in a corner. Against the dim light and faintly outlined against the irregular, arched entrance, like a statue in a niche, was the tall form of Judith. She stood still and almost unbreathing, her hood covering her head and her hands folded beneath

her cloak. The tide washed over the weed-fringed rock and lapped her bare feet, for the gypsy preferred to go barefoot at all times. Not a sound broke the stillness until she said:

"Well?"

"It was a close shave this time," he said. "They are on our track at last."

"The owl is heading the hawk," she said. "It is unpleasant. Do they suspect Crapaud?"

"Hardly, I think," he said wearily. "But it cannot remain a secret. The revenue cutter may be here in a week."

"Buy off Pelham!" she said.

"Nonsense!" he replied. "That is, give everything away and betray ourselves!"

"Every man has his price!" she said. "If we had only a free hand for six months more, we could retire."

"Six months! Three months! One month! To-night! I'm done with the matter from this moment and will take the consequences."

"Very good, Edward Wycherly!" she said. "The consequences may be much, or little. But what shall be done with the stuff already on our hands?"

"You and Pete dispose of it, as you please!" he replied.

"You claim no share?"

"None! I simply want to have nothing more to do with the nefarious business."

"Very good!" she replied. "Edward Wycherly, it is not men like you that win empires."

"I suppose not!" he said, turning away.

"Come, little father!" she cried, accosting Pete. "The night waxes late!"

CHAPTER XXVIII

A SCHOOL INQUIRY

THE burning of Kerins's hay-rick on the night of the concert did not improve matters in the parish. Kerins at once applied to the necessary authorities for compensation; and he was awarded a large sum, more than sufficient to cover his losses, and it was levied exclusively on the parish. The rate fell heavily on the farmers around; and, although it was quite impossible to blame Kerins for defending himself, yet the taxation was so heavy that each felt he had a grievance against Kerins personally, so utterly unreasoning are men where their moneyed interests are concerned. He became therefore more widely unpopular than ever in the parish; and Dr. Gray, the parish priest, who had denounced the outrage in unmeasured terms from the altar, shared his unpopularity. But somehow now the latter had begun to heed such things less than ever. He had turned away his face from the noise and battling of men and was striving with all his might for eternity. Annie's departure, too, so mysterious and unintelligible, seemed to snap the last link in the chain of human sympathies that bound him to earth. The great gap which her absence created had closed up, although he still retained his deep affection for her; and she was still in the habit of spending her holidays with him, and an occasional Sunday when she was off duty. But the intervals were not too dreary; and if his sight had not been growing more impaired under the steady progress of the disease, he could say that the evening of his life was the best, and that he could anticipate the peace of eternity. But there were hours and days of

deep melancholy, when he felt absolutely alone and when his books could be no solace, and now he had to fall back on the benevolence of his curate for society and the spiritual offices of his calling.

He had got from Rome a dispensation to say the Mass of the Blessed Virgin each morning, instead of the Mass of the day. This was a great favour and shed its blessedness and sweetness across many weary hours. But he was obliged by his growing blindness to abandon the daily Office; and, although he had again received a dispensation from that daily duty, he felt the tremendous loss of such hourly communication with the Infinite through the transcendent beauty of the Psalms and Lessons of the Office. For a long time he bore the privation in silence. Then a few times he murmured in the presence of his curate. And one day Henry Liston, in the fervour of pity and self-sacrifice, volunteered to come down every day after noon and go over, verse by verse, the daily Office with his pastor, reading it *in choro*, and thus fulfilling his own obligation at the same time. He did not quite understand the burden and the trial he was assuming. But he persevered grandly, and it was the source of numberless helps and graces to himself.

It was a noble act too, because he had to bear with the imperiousness and fretfulness of the old man and because he had already witnessed one or two painful scenes just before the darkness had closed down on the pastor's eyes, and he could no longer leave home, except for the short journey to the church.

The worst of these scenes had taken place a few months after Mary Liston had become a religious and Annie had gone for training as a nurse. The pastor had driven over to the schools at Athboy to assist at an investigation. It had been reported to the Commissioners of Education that Carmody, the assistant-teacher and nephew of the hated Kerins, had used some children cruelly. And this was set down to personal hatred and dislike toward the children on account of the attitude of their parents. It

was a manifest calumny, but the Commissioners deemed it a subject for inquiry, and accordingly ordered the Inspector of the district to hold a formal investigation. Fortunately, he was an experienced man and perfectly understood human methods of reasoning when personal interests are at stake. He requested the manager's presence, and the latter and his curate attended. The inquiry was formally opened by a brief speech and the prosecutor was called to give evidence. She was the mother of one of the children.

"I'm a poor widda, your honour," she said, "an' sure the poor have no frinds now."

She cast a withering look on the parish priest and went on —

"I've only a small little holdin' an' I'm only milkin' two cows (their calves died last spring); but if I'm poor, I'm honest, an' no wan can say that he has the black of his nail agin me."

"I'm quite sure," said the Inspector mildly, "my good woman, that all you say is correct; but it has nothing to say to the subject of this inquiry. I must ask you to keep close to that."

"An' I am, your honour," she said, "I'm comin' to it; but you must lave me tell me shtory me own way, or I've no bisniss comin' here at all."

"You must remember," said the Inspector, "that it was you solicited the inquiry and formulated certain charges against this teacher —"

"An' good right I had, the blagard," she said. "An' how could he be good, wid the black dhrop in him from two sides. Sure ivry wan knows that the Carmodys were a bad lot; an' as for the Kerins —"

"Now look here, my good woman," said the Inspector, "I have not come hither to hear about family virtues nor failings —"

"Vartues?" she cried scornfully. "Faith, thin, you needn't come inquirin' afther their vartues. It would be like hunting for a needle in a bundle of sthraw."

"All right!" said the Inspector. "Now come to the point! What is your charge against this teacher?"

"That he bate and ill-thrated me child," she said, sobbing, "that's without his father to protect him. Ah, you ruffian," she said, turning to the unhappy teacher and shaking her fist at him, "if Mike Ryan wasn't over there in his cowl'd grave this blessed and holy day, 'tis you'd be laughing at the other side of your mouth, you ugly *bodach*! 'Tis a nice thing to have the childhre of dacent parents in the parish taught by the likes of you!"

"Very good now," said the Inspector; "but, Mr. Carmody, this is a serious matter for you. I don't think there's occasion for laughter."

"I assure you, sir!" said Carmody, stepping forward, "that so far from laughing, I am greatly pained by the statements of this woman!"

"Woman!" she cried. "Who do ye call 'woman,' you cawbogue? I wouldn't demane meself by comparing me family wid yours —"

"Look now, look now," said the Inspector in despair, "this must stop, or I shall be here till Doomsday —"

"I assure you, Mr. ———," said the parish priest, unwisely breaking in, "that I have been watching the whole proceedings, and so far from Mr. Carmody's laughing at this poor woman, he appears to be deeply affected by the situation."

"Av coorse, av coorse, yer reverence," said Mrs. Ryan, making a profound curtsy to her pastor, which she intended to be killingly sarcastic, "you must take the part of the grabber, as ushal. Every wan knows that you are agin the people, and always wos, ever since you sot foot in the parish. But there's a good God above us to-night —"

"Look here, Missus," said the Inspector, taking out his watch, "there's already half an hour gone by, and I'm not nearer the subject of this inquiry. If this is to go on —"

"Yerra, an' who's shtoppin' yer honour?" she said.

"Sure I'm not to blame. But ye won't listen to a poor 'uman who has no wan but herself and the great God to look afther her little childhre. Sure, you have only to ask me anything you wants to know and I'll tell you the thruth the same as if I was on me Bible oath."

This seemed to clear matters a little and the Inspector said calmly and encouragingly:

"Very good. Now that's quite reasonable. I'm sure you're a truthful and honourable woman —"

"Ah thin, your honour, if poor Father Ned Mahony was here, 'tis he could tell you all about me — me poor dead priesht, that had the feel for his people."

"Very good! that's very consoling!" said the Inspector. "But now come to the point. You say this teacher treated your child inhumanly?"

"He did, your honour; an' I've plinty to prove it."

"All right. But before we proceed to proofs, in what exactly did the cruelty or unnecessary punishment consist? Did he beat the child unnecessarily, or what?"

"Bate the child? Yerra, sure he's always batin' 'em. He bates 'em whin he's cowl'd to get up the hate in his blood; and he bates 'em whin he's hot to cool off his anger. He bates them whin his stummuck is full of mate; an' whin he has only cowl'd praties and salt ling for his dinner on Fridays, he's the d— out an' out!"

"Very good. Then you have noticed some marks of violence on the child's person?"

"Vilence? Why, all his little body is black and blue from the batin' sometimes; and sure 'tisin't a month ago whin he kim home wid his little nose dhropping blood like a stuck calf, and wan of his eyes as big as a turnip."

"And do you connect that with the teacher? Do you mean to say that the teacher used your boy in such a brutal manner?"

"I do, your honour," she said boldly. "You can ax the child yerself and see what he says."

"Very good!" said the Inspector, writing rapidly.

"And now, before I proceed to the evidence, have you any other specific charges to make?"

"Isn't it enough what I've said," she shouted, "to get him thransported for life? Yerra, what more do you want, only to take him now by the showlder and put him outside the dure?"

"Well, we'll see," said the Inspector. "But these are all the specific charges you make?"

"Oh, as for that," she replied, "I could bring a hundred more av I liked. I could tell you how he makes the poor childhre kneel in their bare shins on the edge of a furrum that is as sharp es a razhure —"

"You must confine your charges to any violence inflicted on your own child," said the Inspector. "Now, do you assert that the child was compelled to kneel, as you say, and for what space of time?"

"Well, I'm only saying what everybody does be saying," she replied. "Sure 'tis the common talk of the parish from ind to ind —"

"Very good. Now, we'll take evidence. Where's your boy?"

Patsy Ryan, a stout, ruddy lad, was summoned, and took his place, not without some trepidation, before the tribunal.

"Shpake up now to the gintleman, Patsy," said his mother encouragingly, "and don't be afraid to tell the thruth over right the prieshts."

"What's your name?" inquired the Inspector.

"Patsy Ryne, sor," said the boy, rubbing his hands nervously on his breeches.

"Very good, Patsy. How old are you?"

"Sure, he'll be eight, come Michaelmas," put in his mother, "and sure more betoken, 'twas the night of the tundher and lightnin', whin we thought the ind of the wurruld was comin'."

"Very good. What book are you reading, Patsy?" said the Inspector.

"Furst Book, sor!" was the reply.

"You're a big boy and should be beyond the First Book," said the Inspector.

"An' sure he would, your honour, in any other school in the wuruld. But what can the childhre learn with a *pizawn* like that," pointing to Carmody, "who'd rather be oilin' his hair an' galivantin' wid the girls —"

"Now, now, Mrs. Ryan," said the Inspector, "this won't do! I gave you full latitude and you must now keep silence, please, while I examine your son."

"All right, your honour," she replied. "I'm not goin' to say another word, Iss, Aye, or No!"

"Now, Patsy," continued the Inspector, "have you ever been punished by the teacher?"

"I have, sor," said Patsy.

"In what way?"

"I was shlapped, sor," said the boy.

"On the hand?"

"Yes, sor!" said Patsy, rubbing his hands harder on his breeches, as if he was anxious to wipe out the very memory of the pain.

"What did the teacher slap you with?"

"Wid the shlapper, sor," said Patsy.

"Get me that slapper," said the Inspector to Carmody. The instrument of torture was put on the table.

"Is that it?" said the Inspector.

Patsy eyed it ruefully, still rubbing his hands. He suspected it was about to be requisitioned again. But he recognized his old acquaintance.

"'Tis, sor!" he replied.

"Were you ever punished with any other instrument?"

"Wha'?" said Patsy. These big words were too much for him.

"Did the teacher beat you with anything else?" was the modified question.

"No, sor!" said Patsy.

"But your mother says you have had marks or weals on your body."

"Black and blue, your honour, an' all the colours of the

rainbow. Who marked you, *agragal*? Who bate you about the legs and arrums?" said his mother.

"Billy Fitz, your honour," said Patsy. "He does be kicking me on dher the desk. But he isn't me match, and whin I grows up I'll lick the d— out of him."

"There's the tachin' now they're gettin', your honour," said his mother. "There's the tachin' goin' on in this school. Shure they might as well be among blacks or haythens."

"I see," said the Inspector gravely. "But, my boy, you went home one evening from school with your nose bleeding and your eyes swollen. Was it the teacher punished you?"

"'Twas not!" said Patsy. "'Twas Billy Fitz agin; but whin I'm growed up —"

"Yes, yes!" said the Inspector hastily. "I understand. Then why did you tell your mother that it was the teacher that ill-used you?"

"'Twas Dicky Duggan made me, sor," said Patsy.

"Who is Dicky Duggan?"

"Oh, thin, wan of the dacentest and quitest byes in the parish," broke in his mother. "A good nabor an' a kind frind to the widda and the orfin. Sure 'tis he ploughs me little haggart for me every spring and gives me the seed for the praties."

"Then you told a lie to your mother," continued the Inspector, "when you said it was Mr. Carmody that ill-used you?"

Patsy was silent. His warlike ardour against Billy Fitz had evaporated. He rubbed his breeches in a nervous and melancholy manner.

"You told a lie?" persisted the Inspector.

"Av coorse, he did," replied the mother. "How could he tell anythin' else wid the tachin' they're gettin' here? Sure how can they be good or graceful wid a blagard like that over 'em?"

"I think that closes the evidence!" said the Inspector. "Just one word more. Were you ever put kneeling on a form or desk, Patsy?"

"I was, sor!" said Patsy.

"Just kneel up there. Let me see how you knelt!"

And Patsy knelt comfortably on the seat and leaned rather luxuriously on the desk.

"That will do!" said the Inspector. And Patsy retired with much satisfaction.

The Principal of the School was summoned.

"Have you ever noticed any undue or harsh treatment of the children at the hands of Mr. Carmody?"

"Never, sir! He is very kind and gentle with the children."

"Begor," said Mrs. Ryan, talking to an imaginary and sympathetic audience on the ceiling, "that's a quare question. As if they wouldn't stick together like pick-pockets."

"Mr. Carmody!"

"Yes, sir!"

"You have heard this — ahem! woman's evidence, or rather her specific charges against you. Have you any observations to offer?"

"None, sir," he replied, "except to deny them *in toto*. It is a matter of pure spite, dictated —"

"Now, now, now, Mr. Carmody, I cannot allow that. I cannot listen to any imputation of motives —"

"That's right, your honour," said Mrs. Ryan. "Take that, now, you blagard, you! There's fair play for the poor somewhere, thank God!"

"I just want you to answer my questions briefly," said the Inspector to Carmody, "and to make no comments or explanations. Are you conscious of having ever, in a fit of temper or resentment, ill-used that boy?"

"Never, sir," said Carmody, somewhat nettled. "I've never punished that boy except in the manner already described."

"Oh, glory be to God! Oh, sweet mother above, listen to that!" said Mrs. Ryan. "Yerra, aren't you afraid the ground would open and swally you up, you black-hearted scoundrel, to tell such a lie an' before the

ministers of God? Yerra, your honour, ax him no more questions, or he'll damn his sowl out an' out. Only take him now and put him outside that dure and sind us some dacent bye that'll tache our childhre widout massacraying them — ”

“I think I'll adopt one of your suggestions at least,” said the Inspector, folding up his papers and placing them in a small handbag. “I shall ask no further questions. This inquiry is now closed; and I shall place the evidence before the Commissioners and let you know their decision.”

“An' if you just tell 'em, your honour,” said Mrs. Ryan, “that there's a dacent shlip of a bye, a grandson of ould Mike Lynch's at the forge, and he's just the wan to take Carmody's place here.”

“Very good,” said the Inspector, rising, “but the desirable vacancy does not exist as yet.”

The Inspector lunched at the curate's house and immediately departed; and the two priests were face to face. After a long interval of silence, which Henry Liston was afraid to break, his pastor said:

“Well?”

And Henry answered:

“It is an ugly symptom. I shouldn't care much, but what of the children when such things are drilled into them?”

“Yes!” said Dr. William Gray, “what of the children? What of the next generation?”

Then after a pause he said, as he rose up:

“There! It shouldn't concern me much. I shall be sleeping down there under the elm in the old churchyard. But I don't envy the lot of the coming priesthood. They will have sharp work cut out for them.”

“They will be equal to it,” said Henry gallantly, although his heart misgave him. “They are getting new weapons and adopting a new system of warfare; and believe me, they'll be more than a match for the revolution.”

“I have been hearing that *ad nauseam* and I don't

believe a word of it," said his pastor angrily. "There would be some meaning in that, if you were dealing with educated and intelligent opposition, but of what avail are your new weapons by which, I presume, you mean new books and new systems, when you have to deal with Dick Duggan and Mrs. Ryan?"

There was no answer this time.

"So you're keeping to your new-fangled authors, in spite of all I have said to you. Believe me, Father Liston, you are on the wrong track. There's nothing there but what one of the Fathers called 'the wine of devils.'"

"It is these mediæval conceits that are playing the mischief with the Church," said Henry. "Modern thought will not stand those terrible maledictions of the Middle Ages on everything that is beautiful and refined. 'The body — an open sewer; women — so many devils; poetry — the wine of demons; art — the handmaid of iniquity'; — that kind of thing won't do now, sir! Take my word for it. It won't."

The old man was fumbling with a book which Henry had left open on his desk; and, half in contempt for what his curate was saying, half through curiosity, he was peering at its pages with dim eyes held close to the print.

"Who wrote this?" he said at last with an accent of stern anger in his voice that sent the blood from his curate's face.

"Oh! that?" said Henry, rising and coming over to where his pastor was sitting. "That's the *Geständnisse* of Heine — a profession of faith —"

"A profession of ribald blasphemy!" said his pastor in a voice of thunder. And he sent the book flying through a pane of plate-glass, which was smashed into atoms. He then strode furiously from the room.

He had stumbled on a pitiful, but audacious, passage in which the little broken German Aristophanes makes a comparison between himself and the Almighty.

Hence, when a few days after, Henry Liston volun-

teered to come down every day and read the Office with his blind pastor — a task of patience and much pain — he was doing a noble thing, a self-sacrificial act, which was sure to reap a rich reward.

CHAPTER XXIX

A REVERIE AND A NIGHT CALL

NURSE O'Farrell was sitting alone one of the nights of that winter in the nurses' room off the main corridor of a certain hospital in the City. She had been four years or more in the profession, had passed through the stern novitiate, had seen life abroad at some private houses, where wealthy patients were under her hands; but her heart had not yet hardened at the sight of suffering, nor had it been closed up to the gentle influences that rained upon it, even though at widely separated intervals, from old and cherished friendships. From time to time she rose and passed into the adjacent ward, walking very gently in her soft felt slippers, and peering under the faint light of the lamps at the faces of the sufferers. Sometimes she had to raise up the bed-clothes, fallen from the arm of a restless sleeper; sometimes she had to raise and smooth a sunken pillow; sometimes she watched for minutes in silence to detect any morbid symptoms in some patient who had undergone an operation; and sometimes she had to speak a soothing word to some poor invalid, tortured by insomnia and staring half frantic from ceiling to floor to get some rest for that throbbing brain. She was too young to philosophize much on such matters; but the constant sight of suffering made her very humble; and, it was always with a little silent sigh of gratitude, she went back to the lonely room. This night, too, her thoughts had taken an unusually deep and reverential turn, for she had been reading a letter which had come by the evening mail from the far-off convent where her friend, Mary Liston, was carrying on another heroic

woman's work in prayer for smitten humanity. Annie had read the letter hastily when the post came in. Then she had been summoned to tea. Now, in the intervals of her solemn watchings, she had more leisure to take up the precious paper and study it, line by line.

They were the words of a fine soul, which by one stupendous act of self-sacrifice had emancipated itself completely from the things of earth and was walking in the eye of heaven. And beneath the sweet, solemn words there breathed a tone of gentle humility that brought tears into Annie's eyes.

"You know," she said, "we have the same vocation — you, to work; I, to pray, for those who are so dear to God. Sometimes I think that yours is the higher calling; and I say to myself: 'Won't you be surprised if you see little Annie very much higher than you shall be in Heaven?' Then, to reassure myself, I put out my hand, for these thoughts always come in the watches of the night, and I touch the rough rug, or the coarse habit, or the masonry on the wall, that is not even plastered. I do this to give myself a little courage, so that I may be able to say I'm doing a little for our Lord. But then the thought occurs: 'Ah! but now the little martyr, Annie, is up and watching and alone; and I see her as the hands go round slowly on the clock; and she must not sleep, nor even doze; for there beneath her hands are precious lives that must be protected so that the little flame shall not flicker, nor go out in the darkness. And I — I can sleep and sleep soundly; and I have no great responsibility; and therefore, I shall have no great reward. And then, Annie can pray as well as watch and work; and I see her dear face bent over her prayerbook or her book of meditations there under the gas-lamp when not a sound breaks the silence or interrupts her communion with God. Ah me! it is all very grand and beautiful; and I think how our dear Father, St. Francis, would love you, because of all your kindness to the little ones of Christ. And don't be surprised, dear Annie, if some night, when you are lifting up and soothing some poor sick child — don't be surprised if St. Anthony comes and places the Divine Infant in your arms. There! you'll say, I suppose, I'm rhapsodical; and these are the dreams of a sick nun, but stranger things have happened; and then, nothing can be too great or good for my Annie.

"I wonder do you often go down to the dear old spot where we

spent a few happy weeks together. Rohira comes to me sometimes as in a dream — the sea, and the old gray castle, and the gentle old Doctor, and that poor boy, whom the Gypsy said his mother was calling —”

But here the letter fell from Annie's hand; and she began to muse and think. And she saw two sad pictures, which she would have liked, if she were able, to blot from memory. The one memory was of a certain winter night, when she was hastening to her night-duty across the City; and she passed at a certain street corner a group of young men; and they whistled and chirped; and, turning round indignantly, she thought she recognized the face of Jack Wycherly, and that he slunk back into the darkness before her eyes. The other memory was of another night, when the streets were deserted, but for a group of giddy students and shop-girls who were chatting and laughing boisterously at a street corner; and she thought again that the lamp-light fell on the familiar face. Then, one day, he came enrolled as a clinical student to the very hospital where she attended. But she passed him by. She heard his name mentioned as the most brilliant and promising pupil of a leading surgeon in the City; and she watched the operations with renewed interest when he was there. Once she thought her heart stood still when she heard the operating surgeon call out:

“Wycherly, come here, and take that forceps. I can depend on you.”

But she never spoke to him — partly because it was more or less against the etiquette of the hospital; but principally because he had been gravely lowered in her esteem. But she noticed him; noticed that he had grown rapidly into manhood, that the broad forehead seemed to have expanded under the clusters of hair that now seemed deepening into auburn; and she noticed, or thought she saw the fires of genius kindling in those deep blue eyes, which had looked up at her so reverential and so timid ever so many years ago. Then, one day, she nearly fell when a strangely familiar voice behind her,

as she walked along the hospital corridor, said deferentially:

"Miss O'Farrell — Annie — why do you avoid me? Do you forget Jack Wycherly, your old pupil?"

But in a moment her woman's wit and self-possession came back; and, looking him steadily in the face, she said coldly:

"You are not the Jack Wycherly that I knew."

"Oh, but I am, Miss O'Farrell," he said, not understanding the sinister meaning of her words. "Surely, I haven't changed so much in appearance that you cannot recognize me?"

"In appearance not much," she said. "But you are not the boy, so gentle and so proud, that used to come to uncle's; and you are not the Jack Wycherly that did the honours of Rohira to me and my friend."

Something in her tone of voice struck him. It was an echo of his own conscience; and the hot blush ran to his face.

"How is that, Miss O'Farrell?" he asked with an offended air.

She hesitated for a moment, unwilling to offend or give pain, for that sudden flush of face showed how deeply he felt her words. But her strong will came to her aid.

"The young medical student," she said slowly, but now she had grown pale with pain — the pain she knew she was inflicting, "who insults ladies in the streets at midnight, and spends valuable time in flirting with giddy girls under gas-lamps, is not the Jack Wycherly whom I knew long ago!"

He was silent, looking at her, wonderingly, doubtingly. Then, suddenly, a great wave of offended pride seemed to sweep over his soul, for he turned away muttering:

"These are the things that drive men to the devil!"

Since that day they had not spoken. They met but seldom; and then only in the operation-room, or in the wards, where there were always many students and a few nurses and doctors; and there seemed to be a tacit understanding that they should not recognize each other.

Yet at times her heart was troubled at his words: "These are the things that drive men to the devil!" and she used to watch him carefully when he was engrossed in his patients, to see whether there were any signs of dissipation — any of the slight hints that Nature gives when she is undergoing ill-treatment. But no! he was always the same handsome, clever Jack Wycherly; and every day seemed to add something to his reputation.

One day a young nurse said to her:

"That young student, whom you notice so much, has the most perfect Grecian face I ever saw. It is the face of a young god!"

She had been reading French novels. But Annie was annoyed; and from that day forward, she was more circumspect in her looks. But the vision had not faded; and now, as the clock struck midnight and the letter of the young Collettine lay open in her lap, she went over all these details again, as a young girl will, who has come to the years of idle musing and reverie.

She sighed a little and took up the letter of her young friend again.

"It is idle to hope, I suppose, that they will ever become Catholics; but then, in their own way, they may serve God. I am quite sure that the good old doctor will get many and great graces before he dies, for all his kindness to the suffering poor. And I think that boy has a future — that is, if his mother does not come for him. But, there! these are melancholy thoughts. Let us dismiss them! Will you ever come to see me? I am dying to see you, dear Annie, and in your nurse's uniform. Is it blue, navy blue, or brown? I hope the latter, because that is the colour of our Order and our habit. Won't you laugh when you see my rough brown habit and leathern belt (but that's fashionable now, I believe) and sandals? You will be a little shocked at our flagged floors, and the arched ceilings of brick over our cells, and the rough masonry of our walls. But you will have no occasion for hygienic (is that the word?) lectures. Everything is spotless and clean as your own room at the hospital. — Hark! there goes the vigilante to ring the bell for Vespers; and you know our rule — letter unfinished! meals untasted, etc. — good-night and pray for me!"

But the letter, interesting as it was, did not set aside the vision of the student and its pain. The night wore on; and the darkness and loneliness seemed to deepen. Annie rose more frequently than her duties demanded, and walked her ward on tiptoe. It was the deepest hour, preceding the dawn, and sleep seemed to hang heavy on the eyelids of the sufferers. At least, she thought, I shall have little more to do to-night until the day-nurse comes at eight. I shall read a little, think a little, dream a little; ah! if I could only pray much, and not a little. Ah! my little Collettine, you are up now after your four hours' sleep. I see you in the dim, cold choir, where the yellow lamps are smoking and giving barely light to read the Office. I see you in your choir-stall, bending down very low in adoration. The great darkness over your head is alive with angels; and now you raise your head and look where the red lamp is burning in the mystic oil before the Holy of Holies. Are you thinking of me, as I of you? You are, I know it, else why do I feel so fairly happy —

The deep clangour of the night-bell rang shrill and harsh down in the hall, just as she was passing into her room, in a half-dreaming mood. She paused on the threshold. She knew what it meant. Then, swiftly, as if by instinct, she ran to the surgery; and put together some surgical instruments and lint; and turned on the hot-water tap into a white basin.

Then she waited.

She heard with all the indifference of one now hardened to such things the hurried steps in the hall, the banging of doors, the whispered orders of the doctors, the sound of hurrying feet, until an attendant, rushing up the stairs, met her and said:

"The doctor wishes to know, Miss, can you have No. 12 ready at once?"

"Yes," she said, "in a few minutes. I'll ring. An accident, I suppose?"

"No, Miss, 'tis one of our young men, who was brought

here by the police. I think there was a row, and he's pretty bad."

- Her heart seemed to stand still with apprehension; but she said calmly:

"I shall ring when I'm ready."

She at once got the bed-clothes and other necessities from the hot-press; swiftly lighted the fire in the bedroom; brought in all the surgical and medical appliances she deemed necessary; took one look around to see that nothing was wanting, and then touched the bell.

Through a sense of duty she remained standing in the room, although she would have given worlds to get away from the stifling apprehension that oppressed her. Her heart beat quicker as the muffled tread of the attendants came near; she opened the door, and held it open for them, then she gave one quick glance at the insensible form that lay on the stretcher; and she saw her worst fears verified. It was Jack Wycherly, quite insensible, and there was a froth of blood around his mouth.

Silently, she helped to undress him, not daring to ask a question. Once, as she had to stoop over his face, the odour of spirits, mingled with the rank odour of blood, seemed to exhale from his lips. And then, as the form of the prostrate student swayed helplessly to and fro under her hands, and she saw the degradation, as well as the sorrow of the thing, her firm will gave way, and she found to her intense humiliation that she was weeping. The doctor saw it, stared for a moment at her, and then went over to contemplate the fire, twirling his stethoscope between his fingers.

When all was right, and the student lay back on the dry, cool pillow, the doctor came over, bade the nurse uncover the chest of his patient, applied the stethoscope, moving the hollow tube gently over every region of the chest. There was no need of examining the back or shoulders. He raised himself up, and pointing to one conspicuous spot beneath the left collarbone, he said:

"Just there the trouble is."

Then he added, looking at the nurse, who had now regained her perfect composure:

"It is a case of violent hemorrhage, Miss O'Farrell. There was a street-row. He was struck just there, and somewhat violently, I should say. Look, there is a livid mark. You know the rest. He has had occult phthisis for some time; and the lung was weakened."

"But this coma — this stupor?" said Annie anxiously.

"Oh, that's nothing," said the man of science, smiling. "That will pass off. But, you understand, he must be kept absolutely quiet. If there is any recurrence of the bleeding, I shall leave a little ergotine with you to inject. And you understand the rest."

She took his directions in silence. Then, as he folded up the instrument and was turning away, she said:

"I suppose it is the beginning of the end?"

"Oh, not necessarily," he said. "These hemorrhages are not always the worst sign. It all depends on himself. 'Tis a great pity. He was the most brilliant student that ever walked these wards."

She hardly heard him. The words were ringing in her ears:

"It is things like these that drive men to the devil."

CHAPTER XXX

A CONTESTED ELECTION

WE have already said that the rate levied on the parishes of Athboy and Doonvarragh for the burning of Kerins's hay was pressing hard on many a poor farmer and labourer. And in such cases the aggrieved ones never consider the justice or the injustice of the demand. They only know that they have to pay; and their wrath is directed not against the perpetrator of the evil, but against the victim who has sought to defend himself. Hence the anger of the people during these months was directed partly against Kerins, partly against his pastor, who, in his old zeal for the maintenance of law, thundered denunciations against the criminals. No one seemed to care to ask who was the criminal, although there was a common opinion that the torch that fired the rick of hay came from the boundary ditch that separated Crossfields from the Duggans farm. Some people thought that the altar denunciation was directly aimed at the Duggans, although so veiled that no one could prove it. But Dick Duggan swore that it was he that was aimed at; and, at the same time, he protested his innocence, and that the real culprit would one day be discovered.

Mr. Reeves, the member of the Defence Association, who had taken Kerins's farm under his protection, was promptly on the scene, and aided by every means in his power the cause of his client. He again called on Dr. Gray. The old man was getting feeble, and he had run almost blind. His proud spirit was almost broken under the trials of life. He felt how powerless he was under the blows of fate; how useless were great resolves and high, impartial desires in conflict with resistless circumstances. And the keenest pang of all was that he was now con-

vinced that his people were passing through a dread revolution, when every principle would be discarded and set aside. He had come to that sad pass when a man looks to the grave as his only hope.

Reeves was surprised at the sudden alteration in the old man's appearance. He expressed some solicitude which was curtly, if courteously, received. Then once more he repeated his thanks for the stern denunciations levelled against crime by the aged pastor. The latter made no reply. He did not seek thanks from that quarter. Quite unabashed, Reeves explained that he was now a candidate for the honour of being appointed Local Guardian, and he felt sure that the good pastor, being a man of law and order, would lend him his vote and influence to secure the coveted honour.

Then the old fires blazed forth again.

"No!" he said emphatically. "I cannot give you my vote; and whatever little influence I now possess shall be directed against you. I have no wish to be discourteous, and therefore I shall say nothing as to the attitude your class has always assumed toward the country's best interests. But all my life long I have been a Nationalist. All my sympathies are with the people from whom I have sprung. If any Nationalist candidate steps forward, I shall support him. If none, I shall not record my vote."

"I was hoping," said the other with unruffled temper, "that the time for those distinctions had gone by, and that all classes were now united in view of the common welfare."

The old man shook his head.

"You are mistaken, sir," he said. "At least, so far as I know, we have not reached that point as yet."

"I think," said Mr. Reeves, "that bygones should be bygones. The worst of our people is that they are so retentive of things that should long ago be forgotten and forgiven. So long as the classes are at war with one another, what hope can there be for the future?"

"Not much, perhaps," said the priest. "But, you see, our ideals and principles are wholly irreconcilable. At least," he said, correcting himself hastily and speaking with the methodical accuracy that years of close reasoning and training had taught him, "our larger ideals do not meet with mutual acceptance. In small matters, such as industries and such things, we may agree; but no amount of material prosperity can or rather ought to wean away the minds of the people from the great ideal of their own nationhood."

"An impossible ideal!" said Reeves. "Why should the people forget the solid advantages of life and grasp at shadows?"

"Why? Because God has made them thus," said the priest. "They can no more get rid of that idea of independent nationhood than they can level their mountains and drain their rivers dry."

"Well," said Reeves, rising, "I have nothing to say to such matters. I'm not a politician. I have no politics. I'm not a Unionist, nor a Conservative, nor a Nationalist. I only wish to do good to the people and to wipe out the past."

The old man smiled.

"We have heard that kind of reasoning a hundred times, Mr. Reeves," he said. "It won't do. It won't do. You are with the people, or against them; that is, you embrace the entire programme, or reject it."

"I'm very sorry to hear you say so," said Mr. Reeves sadly but courteously. "It makes one despair of Ireland to hear a man of your education and high principle speak thus."

"I have spoken but the truth," said the aged pastor. "There never is harm in speaking the truth."

"Yes! But what is Truth?" said Reeves, as he bade the old man good-day.

Reeves was opposed by a prominent young Nationalist, a farmer in the locality, who had been a prominent

Leaguer in his time and had spent one month in gaol. As a Leaguer and a leading spirit amongst the politicians of the parish, he had been in open sympathy with the Duggans and had done all in his power to compel Kerins to give up Crossfields and go back to America. Although he made no attempt to conceal his feelings and sympathies, he had never been offensive and had drawn the line rigidly between what he considered a legitimate diversity of view from his parish priest and open rebellion against the authority of the Church. Hence, although he had espoused the cause of the Duggans, his refusal to support them in their opposition to the pastor had diminished their friendship; and, considering the power they exercised in the parish, it made him nervous about his success.

He called also on the parish priest, but with fear and trembling. His Irish heart softened when he saw the debility of the old man, as he felt his way along the hall and opened the dining-room door. He twirled his hat nervously between his hands as he entered and was bidden in a cold and formal manner to sit down.

"I'm going in for the vacant place in the Union, yer reverence," he said, "and I came to ask your support."

"You don't deserve much consideration from me, Gleeson," said the old man.

Gleeson hung his head.

"You have taken a wrong stand against Kerins," continued the priest relentlessly. "You have taken the side of injustice against justice; and you have aided and abetted crime in the parish."

"How is that, yer reverence?" said the young man, bridling up. "I certainly thought that the Yank might have stayed where he was and left the Duggans that little bit of land that they wanted. But I have committed no crime; and I offended the Duggans by not goin' agin you."

"I have no feeling one way or the other about myself," said the priest. "What I consider is the law of God.

And the man that committed the crime of firing Kerins's haggart and putting a heavy tax on the parish was guilty of a terrible crime and is unquestionably bound to restitution."

"You don't mane to say, yer reverence, that I did it?" said the young man, deeply aggrieved.

"I have no evidence one way or the other," said the priest. "But suspicion points in one direction and takes in all their friends and sympathizers."

"Thin I may tell your reverence," said the young man, "that it was nayther Duggan, nor any friend of the Duggans, ever sot fire to Kerins's hayrick. The people well know who did it, and can put their hand on them."

"Then why don't they do it?" asked the priest, although he knew it was a foolish question.

"Because thim that did it would do worse," said Gleeson. "But it will all come out a-yet."

Then, after a pause, he rose up, saying:

"I may take it thin, yer reverence, that I'm not goin' to get your support?"

"You may take nothing of the kind," said the priest. "Mr. Reeves was here this morning, and I refused him."

"What?" said the young man in surprise. "Everywan says that Reeves is your man."

"Then what brought you here?" said the priest.

"I wanted to get the refusal from your own mouth," said Gleeson.

"My God!" said the old priest in despair, "these people will never understand me. What right have you, or any of your likes, to say that I have given a wrong vote in my lifetime, or done aught else against my country? I, who have always been on the side of the people, who have fought their battle, who knew the bravest of the men that fought for Ireland, before any of you, you insolent and ignorant young puppies, was born — I, to be taken as a traitor and a backslider by fellows that do not regard the laws of God or man, and who would thank God that they had a country to sell — oh! what an age

to live in! 'Tis long, Gleeson, since your father, or your brave old grandfather, who carried his pike in '48, would think and speak as you have spoken."

The violent emotion of the old blind priest seemed to touch the sensibilities of the young man deeply and he made an abject but fruitless apology. The shame of being thought a traitor to his principles, even when he was most deeply attached to them, had gone too far into the breast of the old man to be relieved by mere excuses. He made a gesture as if to bid the young man go; and the latter, shamed and sorrow-stricken, departed.

Late in the evening he went up the hill toward the farm where the Duggans lived. He was heavy at heart after his rencontre with his pastor; but he was anxious about his election and came to consult his supporters. His visit was taken coldly. He affected a confidence which he did not feel.

"Things are going well, Dick," he said, as the young man met him in the haggart. "I'm pretty sure now that we'll give Reeves the divil of a lickin'."

"Indeed?" said Dick, plunging his hands in his trousers' pockets, and looking over the landscape.

"Yes!" said Gleeson, noticing the coldness, "I think that we'll give the landlords such a lesson this time that they'll never show their faces here agin."

"That 'ud be a pity," said Dick. "Some landlords are good, and some are bad, and some are middlin'."

"An' what is Reeves?" said Gleeson with some anxiety.

"Well, some say he is a good man enough," said Dick coolly. "They sez he's good to the poor and gives 'em tons of coal at Christmas."

"But he's a Unionist, he's the president, or secretary, or something in the Defence Union, an' he's a landlord," said Gleeson.

"The people doesn't mind thim things now," said Dick. "These are ould-fashioned things. And sure now 'Tis everywan for himself, and God for us all."

Gleeson looked away and began to whistle softly. Then his temper rose.

"Perhaps you mane that you and your father are going to go back of all ye ever said or done; an' goin' to vote for the inimy?"

"Better an honest inimy than a desateful frind," said Dick.

"Do you mane me?" said Gleeson, with blazing eyes.

"I mane thim that are supportin' you, or sez they are," said Dick.

"To cut it short," said Gleeson, "you mane that you and your father are goin' back of your counthry and your creed; an' goin' over to the landlord an' the souper?"

"You may put it anny way ye like," said Duggan. "But me and me father will vote for Reeves, av it was only to shpite thim that's backing you."

"May it do you good!" said Gleeson, moving away. "But you may be sure 'twill nayther be forgiven or forgotten for ye."

And Reeves, landlord, Unionist, Member of the Defence Union, Head Emergency man, etc., was elected by the votes of the people over the head of the young Nationalist, who had slept on the plank-bed and walked the treadmill for his country.

But the latter had his revenge. It soon became quite clear that the Duggans were exceedingly hopeful that their ambition was at last to be realized. Crossfields, the snug farm on the hill-side, with its trim hedges, its deep, dewy soil, its comfortable dwelling-house and spacious out-offices, was practically theirs. For now Kerins had become, under the burden of much trouble, a stooped and worn man. All the fires of independence which he had brought from the Western States seemed to have smouldered down into white ashes of despair; and, although still, with the instinct of industry and thrift, he kept his place neat, it was quite clear that he was taking to that solace of the wretched — drink; and

that it was only a matter of time that he should become a hopeless bankrupt. Many a morning, before the larks rose up from their dewy nests in the thick clover, Dick Duggan watched across the boundary-ditch that separated his farm from Kerins's — watched with eager and covetous eyes the rich meadows, where the purple and white clover was smothered beneath the rich, sweet grass, which was rapidly shooting into the yellow tassels of the hay; watched the cattle knee-deep in the succulent pasture, and the long parallel ridges, where the tender grass-corn was springing from the red earth. Many a time his gaze wandered across the fields to the long white-washed walls of the farm-house, nestling beneath its roof of thatch; and a very sweet and gentle vision (for such visions do come even to such hardened natures as Duggan's) of domestic felicity, shared by one of the bonniest maidens of the parish seemed to arise and shed its radiance across the dull, gray monotone of the now wifeless and childless home. Yes! Even Dick Duggan was so cocksure of Crossfields that he had almost made his formal engagement with Martha Sullivan; and had even indulged the imagination of his future bride with a repetition of all those blissful fancies that were haunting himself. Hence when Reeves, with all the coolness and effrontery of his class, called to solicit his vote, Duggan hesitated, asked questions, delayed answers, and practised all the arts of a skilled diplomatist, until he had extorted a half-promise from the wary landlord that, should Crossfields again become tenantless, his own priority of claim should be admitted. Then he gave his vote.

There was some shrugging of shoulders, and many questions, and some comments when it was known that Dick Duggan had actually supported the most obnoxious man in all the land. But then men shrugged their shoulders and dismissed the subject with the reflection:

"'Tis now every man for himself and God for us all!"

And — Dick Duggan had the majority on his side.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

MEANWHILE, Henry Liston had been passing through a singular mental revolution. That painful scene with his pastor, when the latter in a fit of furious zeal flung the offending volume through the window, awakened new thoughts, and threw the young priest further back upon himself. Up to that time he had formed the judgment that his pastor, otherwise and in every way an excellent type of a great shepherd of souls, was, however, somewhat of an extremist, because old-fashioned and conservative and without that flexibility of character that fits in with changes in the times and circumstances of life. Hence he had disregarded the very plain criticism and sarcasm which the old man flung broadcast upon his more liberal and modern studies. They were, he thought, the privilege of a class that was rapidly passing away; and it was hardly worth while to controvert them, or reason the old man into broader and freer methods of thought. But, just as the sharp report of a pistol in some Alpine valley will precipitate the fall of an avalanche, so that act of violence of which his pastor was guilty seemed to fling across the soul of the young priest vast doubts and difficulties, which hitherto were only poised in solution and mildly threatening.

He took up the offending volume of the unhappy poet from the grass where it lay beneath the broken window. It was uninjured, except for one sharp cut across the smooth binding; and he opened and read with deliberation the passage that had so moved his pastor's passion. It was infinitely pathetic — a cry, a complaint, as of a

wounded thing, to the Being who had wrought such havoc into its life. He thought he could see the unhappy man on his bed of mattresses far away there in the room above the seething life of a Parisian boulevard — paralyzed, his spine broken, his limbs emaciated, his eyelids closed down helplessly over the burning eyes. It was a pitiful vision of the fancy; and the pleading and complaining words almost brought tears into the young priest's eyes, for they appeared to be the voice of bruised and wounded humanity; but suddenly he saw the worn hand lift up one eyelid; and looking toward him, he saw that eye leering at him in very scorn for his maudlin pity. And then came the words of blasphemous anger, that had set ablaze the pious soul of his pastor; and the strong, scornful nickname that, half a jest, was wholly an insult to the Almighty.

He put down the book and began to think:

"Is it right for me to find pleasure in such things? Am I not a priest, chosen from thousands to be the loyal servant and faithful subject of my King? Did I not swear, whilst my hands were clasped within my bishop's, fidelity and loyalty to Him, who had predestined me from eternity to be one of His holy and anointed band of priests, who were to carry His banner, and extend His empire? And am I serving Him loyally whilst my bookshelves are lined with literature, every line of which seems to be a fierce indictment of His sovereign goodness? Is it not treasonable to keep treasonable productions in one's possession and to relish their disloyalty for the sake of their art? True, I wouldn't for the world place one of these dangerous and unholy things in the hands of the most enlightened of my parishioners, lest I should outrage his faith, or scandalize him by the very toleration of such iniquity. But have I the right to indulge in secret a certain morbid if enlightened taste for such forbidden things, that if I were to utter them from the pulpit, I should be stripped of my priesthood and silenced forever? And is there not some inconsistency

in uttering several times a day the magnificent praises of the Shepherd-King and Poet of Israel and then laying down the harp of Sion to take up the viol of Satan? Is there not a gulf, wider than heaven, deeper than hell, between the souls of the kingly Psalmist and the smitten German Jew? Between that terrible, mocking *Spitz-name*, "The Aristophanes of Heaven," and the seraphic rapture which made the sublime convert, Augustine, exclaim:

Whence therefore have I known Thee, O Lord, most high God above the heavens and the earth, whom neither Cherubim nor Seraphim can perfectly know, but veil their faces with the wings of contemplation before the face of Him who sits upon the throne, and proclaim: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Hosts, all the earth is full of Thy glory? The Prophet trembled and said: Woe unto me, because I have been silent, because my lips are polluted. And my heart has trembled and said: Woe unto me, because I have known Thee. Nevertheless, Lord, woe unto those who are silent concerning Thee, for without Thee the most eloquent are dumb.¹

The lesson struck home to the heart of the young priest whose mobile disposition was capable of great things, or could be subdued to lower levels. Again he gave one whole day to an examination of the question in all its details. It was a day of much anguish of thought, of such searchings and inquiries into the most secret recesses of the soul that the probing becomes infinitely painful, and the wavering of the judgment causes almost physical anguish. He had gone through these spiritual autopsies again and again; but his decisions were prompt and painless. Under the influence of his sister's letters urging him to the higher life, he had gradually, but without much mortification, weaned himself from those sensible pleasures which, perfectly innocent, began to appear somewhat incongruous with his profession. Graceful little etchings and engravings of such pictures as "Merlin and Vivien," or "The Lily Maid of Astolat," were quietly

¹ *Soliloquia S. Aug.* Cap. XXXI.

disposed of; bit by bit, his little silver treasures were melted down and passed in coin into the pockets of the poor. He hesitated a long time about his piano; but finally decided it might be useful. But he parted with his *Operas* and bought *Oratorios*. Even his love for flowers, with all other beautiful things, he subdued so far that he kept them only for his altar. But now he was called upon by some mysterious voice to part with his beloved books — those silent, but delightful companions, which had shed such a glow of happiness over his life. The tears came into his eyes as he cast them over the well-filled bookcase. But the voice seemed to be peremptory. Finally he compromised with the voice and his conscience. He drew down a red silk lining inside the glass doors of his bookcases and turned the keys in the locks. Then he went out. He passed down along the ridges that sentinelled the sea until he came to the rude ditch that was built above the steep, red rocks, whose feet were washed by the tide. For a few moments he hesitated. He felt the agonies of one who did not know whether he was going to perform a heroic deed or perpetrate an atrocious crime. But just then the mocking voice of his pastor seemed to echo in his ears:

Röslein, Röslein, Röslein roth,
Röslein auf der Heiden,

and swinging the keys above his head, he flung them far out into the deep. He just watched until the waters leaped at the impact and then subsided; and he went back to his home not at all unhappy for the sacrifice.

From that moment his spiritual duties, which sometimes had become irksome, began to afford him unusual pleasure. He threw himself into them, heart and soul, and a new life seemed to dawn upon him. He was conscious, too, as he advanced along the road of penance and spirituality, of a strange vigour which seemed to be infused into his character by the steady self-control and spiritual illumination that followed. Gradually he

made up his mind that he had to find all his recreation, as well as his work, in the religious regeneration of the people. He shut his eyes to all their defects; he closed his ears to all siren calls of patriotism and politics; he plunged blindly forward, his strength of soul increasing at every step, into a work where there seemed to be neither recognition nor reward, not even the reward of apparent or even transitory success.

He was helped along a good deal by his daily conferences with his pastor. Every afternoon he rode down to the presbytery; and after a few words the two priests — the old man, with the gray hairs and the extinguished sense of sight; and the handsome, strong, young curate — knelt side by side, or sat, whilst the younger of the two read out, line by line, the Office of the day. He had to go right through it without pause or stop, his pastor repeating the alternate verses or antiphons, which were familiar to him after fifty years, and then listening attentively and reverently to his curate reading out slowly and solemnly the stately passages from the Scriptures and the Lessons in the Second and Third Nocturns. The slow, distinct utterance and dwelling on syllables were a wonderful help toward correcting his too rapid pronunciation. He had now time to notice and relish the sublime sweetness that underlies the noble Psalms in the Office; and, unlike his private recitations, when he felt sometimes that the Office was a burden, these choral readings became so sweet and significant to sense and intellect that he almost regretted their termination. But then he had to take up *Suarez* or *St. Thomas* and read out at least one proposition with all its *scholia* and objections for his blind pastor; and this became, too, after a time, a source of intense pleasure. He felt at last that he was on the summits of the everlasting hills.

Occasionally he pulled from his pocket a little vellum-bound volume, containing the Meditations, Soliloquies, and Manual of St. Augustine, and anticipated his pastor's request for such spiritual reading. But these sublime

canticles were not quite methodical or controvertible enough for the pastor's taste; and Henry had to go back to the hard, dry, terrible reasoning that pervades the modern theologians.

Then they would talk about parish affairs.

"How can we bring them back," the old man would say, reverting forever to the old theme, "how can we bring the people back to their old selves? They appear to have fallen under some malignant spell of selfishness. How I do hate to hear them say: 'Every man now for himself!' It is so unlike the old generous spirit that made their ancestors throw up everything for God and their country."

"I think," said his curate meekly, "that we have to blame ourselves. I fear, sir, that in helping to work out the material prosperities of the race, we have lost hold of what is more important."

"Precisely. Just what I was saying to you about the new patriotism. It is all self, self — the land, and then something else, and then something else, until the whole thing will end in a species of Socialism, and the people's desires become insatiable."

"God forbid! And yet 'tis possible," said his curate. "It is so hard to pursue the material thing and conserve the ideal at the same time."

"Well, keep the ideal before them," said his pastor. "Hold them up and make them fix their eyes steadily on the highest national and spiritual ideals. That is our only hope."

"How is Miss O'Farrell, sir?" said his curate after a pause.

"Well, very well, indeed. She always desires to be remembered to you. She appears to be very happy in her profession. You know it was a big gap in my life in the beginning; but now I see 'tis all for the better. It was selfish of me to try and keep her here always. She had a right to choose for herself."

"Do you know, sir," said Henry Liston abruptly, "I

had always an idea that she wanted to escape from the attentions of that fellow Wycherly?"

It was a secret of some years' standing; and Henry was appalled at his rashness in revealing it so suddenly. It was utterly unpremeditated.

"Ha!" said the old man sharply, a sudden pallor deepening on his white face. He then became silent. And his curate waited in trepidation, not knowing what was coming next. It might be a volcanic explosion, or the puff of a deadened heart.

After a pause which Henry Liston thought would never end, he heaved a deep sigh and said:

"You never mentioned this before!"

"It was only a conjecture," said his curate. "The putting together of one or two things that seemed to fit each other."

There was another pause.

"I had always some suspicion, some idea, that this introduction to the Wycherlys through these boys was not altogether wise. Now I see it," said the old man.

"You meant well, sir!" said the curate soothingly. "And after all, it was a noble lesson in toleration."

"And like all noble lessons, a dangerous personal experiment," said his pastor.

"I understand there is much trouble brewing amongst them at Rohira!" said Henry Liston. "This returned mate, or captain, or whatever he is, does not agree with his father."

"I suppose the fellow is a ne'er-do-well," said his pastor.

"There is some dark suspicion hanging over his relations with those gypsies," said his curate. "The father has come to hear it and, with his old sense of honour, he is indignant about it. I think if Jack survives, and would give up his profession, the father would probably leave him Rohira."

"Or perhaps Kerins would come back into his ancestral home?" said the pastor.

"Not likely, I fear," said his curate. "He has been

rushing to ruin, as you know, but I think I've pulled him up and that he is on the mending-tack. If I could get him married to Martha Sullivan, she would be his salvation."

"Martha Sullivan? Martha — ?"

"You remember her, sir — that handsome girl over at Carrig — old Mick Sullivan's daughter?"

"Dolly? Of course. Is it Dolly? Why, 'tisn't two years since we had her confirmed."

"Yes, she has sprung up to womanhood quickly; and she is a most excellent girl. But Duggan and she have been rather thick. The chances are that it is one of the reasons why Kerins seems to leap at the notion."

"But won't it make matters much worse there?"

"Worse and better!" said Henry Liston. "It will save this poor fellow from ruin; and then it will bring round the Sullivan faction to his side, and they have a big following."

"Kerins is not a bad fellow, I believe?" said the old man.

"Not at all. He's a little careless, like so many who go abroad. But 'tis easy to get at the soft side of him. I think I'll get him to his Easter duty this year. And in the end, I think, he'll balk them all. The Duggans will rage a little and then subside. I wish that ruffian, Dick Duggan, would go to America. The rest of the family are fairly quiet."

"Wasn't it an extraordinary thing that they voted for Reeves? I didn't think that there was an Irishman in the parish that would side with him."

"It is the 'New Ireland,' sir!" said his curate, "of which we were speaking. There were injured feelings, filthy lucre, and then the 'gentleman' came on the scene, and more than the 'gentleman' — the lady came with her lavender gloves, and her perfumes, and her seal-skins, and what Irishman could resist that? They'd put the rope round Robert Emmet's neck for such an honour."

"Yes, 'the gintleman,' 'the gintleman!'" echoed his pastor. "How well I remember the word! But I had always been hoping that the Land League had killed all that."

"Not a bit of it!" said his curate. "They are more abject slaves to the gentry than ever! If I hadn't stopped him, Kerins would have sold his farm to young Wycherly. The fellow has money, and he'd have given him double what he had paid for it. And then, as I was saying, he was impatient of his father's tenure of Rohira and he had set his heart on marrying Miss O'Farrell. He told Kerins so."

"My God! what an escape!" said the old man. "I'd rather see her dead."

"There was no danger!" said his curate. "I think she must have expressed herself pretty freely, when the matter was even hinted at. And now, I think, Wycherly will cut. He'll go back to sea; but, they say, he's blocked there and that he was expelled from his ship."

"Strange that Annie never told me!" murmured the old man. "She might have told me, I think!"

"I don't think so," said his curate. "It was rather a delicate matter; and then she has such superb self-reliance that probably she thought she would spare you pain, whilst protecting herself."

"My brave little girl!" murmured the old man.

"Yes! she *is* a brave girl!" echoed his curate.

"I shall never attempt to cross her will again," said the old man. "I see now I can rely on her sagacity and firmness in every emergency."

CHAPTER XXXII

A FULL CONFESSION

ANNIE O'FARRELL had lifted the blinds, lowered the gas-jet, and allowed the gray light of the dawn to stream into the room; and still her patient had not recovered from the heavy coma, or unconsciousness, in which he had been brought from the city streets to the hospital. His face, which had been flushed when he was brought in, assumed under the more searching light of the morning a gray, ashen hue, which was made all the more ghastly by the hectic purple beneath the cheek-bones, and the thick masses of auburn hair that lay matted and clotted on his forehead. A great pain was in her heart as she watched him, dreading the first signs of returning consciousness and her own recognition. For the words, as of a despairing soul, came back and smote her with their dread significance:

"It is things like these that drive men to the devil."

She thought of her proud aloofness and coldness toward him with a remorse that no reasoning could stifle; for a generous heart will admit of no excuse for itself where it has erred. She argued: I was not bound to recognize or notice him. The accident of our acquaintance some years ago did not oblige me to resume that acquaintance under altered circumstances. I was quite justified in what I did, and also in what I said, bitter though it might have been. I meant it as a corrective and I hoped it would have such an effect.

But what woman's heart would accept such reasoning in face of a stricken thing? All in vain. She bathed the temples of the boy in camphor and vinegar, and it is possible they were diluted with a tear.

The day nurse came on duty at eight o'clock; and Annie prepared to depart.

"One of our young hospital students," she said, explaining, "brought in during the night."

"Apoplectic?"

"No! He has had one violent hemorrhage, and it may recur. This is the prescription, should it have to be renewed; but I think there is sufficient in this bottle for the day. And here is the ergotine for injection."

"Wycherly?" said the young nurse, reading. "Is that it? Oh! that brilliant young lad! What a pity. It seems phthisis, I suppose?"

"I hope not. We must do our best to ward it off."

"Of course," said the nurse with a little smile. "We must use particular care in Mr. Wycherly's case."

"He is one of our own students," said Annie, biting her lips. "And I know Surgeon Cleeve is deeply interested in him."

"Of course, I'm sure a good many people are interested in Mr. Wycherly. He's from the country, is he not?"

"Yes! His father is a retired navy-surgeon. His mother is dead," said Annie, who was trying heroically to keep her temper and suppress her mortification.

"Ah well! then, we must do all we can for him. Any other bad cases?"

"No! That little girl, who was operated upon, was restless during the night. And I fear Mrs. Williams's temperature will be found abnormally high. Call Dr. Alison's attention to it. Don't forget. And that girl, Alice Lane, has had no sleep still. I don't think she closed her eyes during the night. But here is the chart. I'm dying for a cup of tea."

Despite the presence of her watchful and critical fellow-nurse, she went over and examined her patient minutely again. But he was still unconscious of her presence. She re-arranged his dress and the bed-clothes, bathed his forehead and lips again, put back the matted hair,

and glanced around. The little nurse had thoughtfully gone out, and Annie followed her.

When she returned in the evening for night-duty, Jack Wycherly was quite conscious, and somewhat better. There had been no recurrence of hemorrhage during the day. But he lay very still and quiet; and for some time he did not notice the change of nurses, everything had been done so gently. He appeared to be quite absorbed in his own thoughts, as he stared before him; and Annie glided about the room unnoticed, went out, and came back again.

Then suddenly she spoke and he recognized her, and a deep flush shot up and changed the pallor of his face. She noticed it and said at once:

"You are ever so much better, Mr. Wycherly. But you must keep awfully quiet. You had a slight hemorrhage, and we must prevent its recurrence."

"Was it slight?" he said. "Because there is some pain here."

He pointed to the apex of the left lung.

"I mean slight, that is, of no consequence," she answered, "provided it does not come on again. And you know that the least excitement will bring it on."

"I am altogether in your hands, Annie," he said simply. "Do with me what you please."

And during the greater part of the night very few words passed between nurse and patient; only the latter seemed to follow her with his eyes everywhere when he was awake. He thanked her very gently for all the little offices she performed for him, but did not seem anxious to enter into fuller conversation.

The senior surgeon, with whom Jack Wycherly had been a favourite pupil, came in during the next day to see him. He treated the boy with rough good-humour, but examined the lung carefully. He then made a few inquiries about his history, parentage, etc., and went out looking very grave.

"I never thought that fellow would drink," he said to another surgeon. "He struck me as a model of steadiness. Still I can't account for that sudden hemorrhage. There was a street row, you say?"

"Yes, and I think he was struck violently just there. It was an unfortunate affair."

"We must do something with these young chaps. Hallo! there, Fleming!"

A young student came over.

"Do you know anything of Wycherly's accident?"

"No, sir!" said the student promptly.

"And, of course, if you did, you wouldn't tell."

"No, sir! But I don't think there's much to tell. Wycherly was the steadiest fellow in the College; and I'm sure 'twas none of our fellows he had the row with."

"Did you ever see him under the influence of drink?"

"Never, sir, 'pon me — ahem! He might take a liquor, like any of us, but that's all!"

"I'm afraid he has taken one too much!" said the man of science meaningly.

Toward evening Wycherly became very restless and his temperature ran up to 102°. There was no exciting cause apparently; but the nurse thought it necessary to summon the resident surgeon. It was quite true. The temperature had risen. Of course the approach of night would account for a little increase, but not for so much.

"Wycherly," said the surgeon, "you are worrying or fretting about something?"

"No!" said the patient feebly. "But I feel feverish."

"And you are feverish," said the surgeon. "Now, will you keep your mind absolutely quiet; and, Miss O'Donnell, will you mention to the night-nurse that she is not to allow Mr. Wycherly even to speak, except when absolutely necessary? This night's rest is of supreme importance."

But during the lone evening hours, when the failing

sunlight trembled in the sick-room, and the twilight was gathering, he seemed to become still more restless, until at last Annie arrived, looking ever so neat and cool and spruce after her morning's rest, when he heaved a deep sigh and closed his eyes as if in peace.

During the next few days he advanced, retrograded, was sometimes in his normal mood, sometimes excited, to the great astonishment of the surgeon.

"Look here, Wycherly," he said one day, after making a patient and searching examination of symptoms, "there is something on your mind which you ought to get rid of. You should be up and moving about now; but I can't let you get up with such a pulse as that. And the lung is healing up. Can't you keep quiet and let mind and body rest together?"

"There's nothing on my mind," said Jack Wycherly. "You're quite mistaken, doctor. It must be some febrile symptoms lurking in the system."

"Of course, it is," said the doctor sententiously. "They are lurking in your brain somewhere; and, until you get them out, you'll not be well."

Far out in the night, indeed in the very creeping inward of the dawn, the patient called Annie gently to his side. She came over. He said:

"Sit down!"

Then, after a few seconds staring at the ceiling, he said, almost in a whisper:

"Annie?"

"Well?" she said, very unwilling to enter into conversation for many reasons. She was always afraid now that he would reveal himself.

"The doctor says that I am feverish because I have something on my mind. He's right. I have!"

She became very nervous now and began to ask herself if she were concerned.

"Then wouldn't it be well to see a clergyman?" she suggested, half frightened at the possibility of being

made the recipient of his confidences. "It will be quite easy to send for any clergyman of your church whom you may desire to see."

"No!" he said faintly. "'Tis no crime, although God knows I'm not faultless. It is something that concerns you; and it is to you I must tell it."

Annie became very nervous now, and to gain time she said:

"I think I hear something in the ward. I shall be back in a moment."

The little run around the adjacent ward did compose her a little. Then, on the threshold of the door, as she returned, she paused to make up her mind. The question was, would she listen or refuse to listen to the young student's explanations. She knew it meant pain and anguish of spirit to herself — perhaps some revelation that would banish her peace of mind forever. She was studying the gas-jet over her head as she stood outside the door. He coughed gently inside; and, casting all thought of self aside, she made a swift, generous resolution, and entering she sat down calmly by the student's bedside.

"I don't wish to pain you, Annie," he said, "and I shall be very brief. You know — no, you don't know, how I hate and abominate myself for having appeared before *you*, once, twice, thrice, under a shameful aspect."

"If that's all, Jack," she said consolingly, "dismiss it from your mind. Boys will be boys. Forget it and try to do better."

"That's your goodness," he said, feebly picking the counterpane, "but it is not my excuse. Do you know I'm glad this has occurred," he pointed to his chest. "I was on the high road to ruin — through despair."

She now remembered his words with a pang.

"I'm all right now," he said; "I have been stopped on the very brink of perdition. My life is forfeit, but I am saved."

She thought these were evangelical ideas belonging to

his religion; and she paid no heed to them. She felt relieved.

"Tell me, Annie," he said after a pause, "does your religion bind you to believe in hell — retribution?"

"Yes!" she said. "But, my dear Mr. Wycherly, I am awfully ignorant. I know nothing of these things. Won't you consult your clergyman?"

He smiled grimly.

"I am not going to force religion on you," he said. "It was one of our bargains long ago, Annie, when you taught me the Latin grammar! But there is a hell, Annie, and I have gone through it. It is to worship far away and far off some great being, and then to know that you have made yourself forever unworthy of her!"

Annie stood up to go. He was startled, and piteously begged her to remain.

"I promise — my head is somewhat light, Annie, and I have weakly betrayed myself — not to hurt your feelings again. Would you let me have a little milk?"

She got some milk and soda; and raised and supported the boy's head, whilst he sipped it.

He lay back refreshed on his pillow, and she was hoping that she would hear no more. But after a few seconds' pause he continued:

"Let me come to the point at once and have done with it. You know, Annie, that I was struck on that night when I was brought in here?"

"Yes!" she said. "So the report has it."

"And probably you supposed it was a wretched street-brawl?"

She was silent.

"Unfortunately no," he continued. "It was my brother, Ned — you remember Ned — who gave me my death-blow, and it was all on your account."

She gave a gasp of surprise and horror.

"Yes!" he went on, as if to himself, "you have a right to be shocked and even to feel that it is an insult. Many

a time I have regretted that you should have ever known us."

"I have never regretted it," she said. "If it was only to have made your good father's acquaintance, I should be glad of it."

"Thank you, Annie," he said. "These are kind, and I know they are truthful words. And — *he* is grateful. But for other reasons, I regretted it. Tell me, did Edward, Ned, ever insult you?"

"I think, Mr. Wycherly," she said, "you are not serving any good purpose in calling up such things. They have long since passed from my memory and I would rather not recall them."

"That's because you are generous and forgiving," he said. "But Ned and my father have fallen out about something — something serious. My father has told him he must never inherit Rohira, nor any of his property."

He stopped to recover breath.

"In fact, I think father intends that I should be the future owner of the place; and he has written to me to ascertain if I would abandon my profession. On the other hand, Kerins — you remember Kerins, who holds Crossfields, just above Rohira? — is leaving for America, and Ned, who has money, is negotiating for the purchase. He intends to settle there."

"That would be disagreeable for your father, would it not?" asked Annie.

"Certainly, he will not like it," said the boy. "But Ned will only buy Crossfields on one condition, namely that you will be his wife!"

It would be difficult to describe the tumult of anger, shame, and wounded pride that swept over the soul of the girl at these words. She was silent for a while with indignation and could only say in a tone of astonishment and incredulity:

"Me? What a shame! You shouldn't have said such a thing, Mr. Wycherly. I would take it as an insult from any other person."

"And you would be quite right," he continued, more calmly, as if he had been reassured on an important point. "But you understand my motives. Let me continue. The rest is brief. He came up to town that day for no other reason than to find out where you resided and place his wishes before you. He dined at my lodgings, and far out in the evening, when he had taken drink, he opened up his mind to me. I couldn't conceal my disgust, and — alas! — I, too, drank freely then. Several times he urged me to communicate with you; and, when I refused, he wanted me to tell him where you lived, at what hour he might call, at what hour he might see you, etc. I gave no information; and to rid myself of the annoyance I left the house, and went into the street. Half-mad from drink and anger, he followed me and persisted in annoying me. Then, suddenly using words that I shall not repeat, he struck me violently in the chest, and instantly I knew my mouth was full of blood. 'Ned, you've killed me,' I said. And then I fell senseless."

The little gas-jet was singing softly to itself as the student ended his story, and there was much silence in the room. He appeared relieved, but Annie was struck with horror at the thought of this man's pursuing her. Then a more gentle idea swept across her mind, and she remembered that this boy had given his life for her sake. She instantly recalled herself to a sense of duty and stood up.

"I hope your mind is quite relieved?" she said.

"Quite so," he replied. "But I fear I have thrown over the burden upon you. But, Annie —"

"Well?" she said, somewhat impatiently, for her mind was torn with anguish.

"I mustn't distress you further," he murmured, "but surely — no! — I cannot say it!"

"Say what you please," she replied rather coldly.

"I mean, Annie, that I hope, in fact I'm sure, you will never dream of entertaining for a moment the idea —"

He stopped short. He could not utter the word.

"I mean," he continued, trying to get a mild equivalent in words for the thought that was burning his mind, "that you will never allow Ned to address you on that subject."

"Make your mind at rest," she said. "He will never address me."

The day-surgeon found in the afternoon of the next day that the patient's temperature was quite normal. And in a few days he was permitted to leave his room. But to every anxious inquiry as to whether the disease would disappear, or reappear under more alarming circumstances, the senior surgeon only shook his head.

CHAPTER XXXIII

CONSPIRING

DICK DUGGAN was growing impatient. In his constant supervision over Kerins and his covetous watchfulness over Crossfields farm, he had noticed that Kerins was not drinking himself into his grave half-fast enough for his wishes. He would have put a distillery at his door, if he could expedite the ruin of this man, who stood in the way of his felicity. But, somehow, Kerins seemed to have stood still and paused on the brink of ruin; and to Dick's intense disgust, after some weeks had passed by, it was noticed that the young priest, Father Henry Liston, was in the habit of visiting there; that, as a probable result thereof, Kerins had given up drink absolutely; and that, as a climax to the calamity, Mass had been said in Crossfields, and rumour had it that Kerins had been to Confession and Communion.

This was intolerable. The hopes that had been suddenly raised were now dashed to the ground. It was quite clear that, under the care and zealous watchfulness of the young priest, Kerins had turned over a new leaf in life, and might now be considered once more on the high road to prosperity. Dick Duggan gave up his morning vigils and remained in bed, instead of sullenly contemplating the gray thatched roof and the dewy fields that lay around the coveted farm. But it created an additional grievance against the priests, whose untimely zeal had wrested, as he thought, the prize from his grasp. It roused at the same time a secret fury in his soul against the man on whose misfortunes he had been hoping to build up his own prosperity.

There was another person, also interested and still more deeply annoyed by the sudden conversion of Kerins from a sot to a decent, industrious man. Ned Wycherly now saw clearly that a prize was slipping from his grasp — perhaps a double prize, because how could he ask Annie O'Farrell to marry him, if he had no home to offer her? Again and again he approached Kerins on the subject, always meeting evasive answers, which became by degrees emphatic refusals. It was just before that period, and whilst he still clung to the hope that he would purchase Crossfields, that he went to the City to see Annie O'Farrell and strive to gain her consent.

All these dreams had now vanished, and he saw himself an outcast from his father's home and with little but a hopeless future before him.

It was in one of his angry and despairful moods he met Dick Duggan one evening and gradually brought the subject about in their conversation. They met in the boreen that ran down from the rear of Crossfields farm toward Dunkerrin Castle. Wycherly was coming up from the beach, and Dick was going to see Pete on some secret errand.

"You needn't go down," said Ned Wycherly. "Pete is coming up to the house with some messages after me and will be here directly."

"We do be sayin', Masther Ned," said Dick, "that some day or another that same Pete will be after getting himself and others into throuble."

"How is that?" said Wycherly. "Pete is an honest fellow enough — that is, as honest as any half-dozen of my acquaintance. He works well; and, if his women steal a little, sure that's in their gypsy blood."

"Thru for you!" said Dick. "But the law of the land is a wondherful thing intirely. It has very long arrums and very sharp eyes."

"Not sharper than a gypsy's, especially a gypsy woman's," said Wycherly. "Besides, no one around here is going to bother about an occasional goose or hen."

"If you were to hear the Yank in his liquor swearin' at 'em, you wouldn't think so," said Dick. "I heard him wan night some months ago; an' he was sayin' things that would wake up even a barrack of police."

"They say he's not going to America now," said Wycherly, anxious enough to turn the conversation, which was verging on dangerous issues. "He has sobered up; and some of my men told me they saw a van of furniture going in there this week."

"'Twill go out agin the same way," said Dick. "And that before long. Here's Pete!"

The gypsy, holding a coil of rope loosely on one arm and the rudder of a small punt in the other, came lightly up the pathway. He had seen the two men in close conversation whilst he was far away, but he now seemed to start slightly and to be somewhat disturbed at meeting them. He drew back a little, but Wycherly said cheerily:

"Come on, Pete! There's no one here but Duggan, and he has some business with you."

"Oh, 'tis nothin' at all, nothin' at all," said Dick with affected cheerfulness. "Only the loant of somethin' I wanted down at the ould castle. But it can wait."

"Did you hear that Kerins had given up the notion of America?" said Wycherly, addressing Pete.

"Yes!" said Pete, looking earnestly at Dick Duggan. "He's furnishing up the old place and is about to be married."

"There, Duggan, you see I was right," said Wycherly maliciously. "The 'little father' knows everything worth knowing. But Dick says he can't hold it long," he continued, addressing Pete. "He says that the new furniture will be soon going out the way it came in."

"I doubt that," said the little father gravely. "He's a stubborn fellow, that Kerins, and when he once takes a right turn he'll stick to it."

"Unless some wan gives him a showlder and puts him

in the wrong turn agin," said Dick, whose temper was gradually rising.

"Well, in any case, I fear you'll have to wait for the young mistress and Crossfields, Dick," said Wycherly, who was anxious to get from Dick all that he knew.

"Yes! Masther Ned," said the angry peasant. "And I'm afraid your honour will have to wait, too, before you add Crossfields to Rohira and bring the priesht's niece in wid you."

"There was no danger of that," said Wycherly, coolly fanning the flames of the poor fellow's passion. "There was religion barring the way there. But why should Dolly Sullivan give you the 'go-by,' Dick, and take to the Yank? It is a shame for a fine fellow like you to allow that splendid girl to throw herself away on an old dried-up curmudgeon like Kerins."

It is the unhappy lot, hitherto, of the Irish peasant that he has never learned to curb his temper. It is the great traitor of his race. When it is touched, there is no secret so deep that it may not be revealed, no resolution so strong that it may not be repealed. Wycherly knew well how to play on the double organ, whose keys elicit truth, even though they drive out dangerous sparks with it — the double organ of jealousy and hate.

Some faint suspicion that Martha Sullivan had been won from his side by this detested Yankee had already winged its way to Dick Duggan's ears, but had been promptly rejected as impossible. Now, apparently, it was the talk of the parish, and, coupled with the refurnishing of the house, it brought a terrible conviction home to the heart of the unhappy man. He had lost Crossfields forever, and he had been jilted in favour of a detested rival. His cup of bitterness was full. His dark, swarthy face became livid under the terrible excitement, as he clenched his fists together and said:

"You may be jokin,' or you may be in airnest, Masther Ned, an' I'm thinkin' the joke will be turned agin you

yet, and that you'll laugh at the other side of your mouth, if all the people do be sayin' is thrue. But that's your own affair. An' 'tis your own affair, too, that the priesht's niece, widout a pinny to bless herself wid, have given you the cowl'd showlder. But, in respect of Kerins, don't be afeared that anny man or 'uman in the parish 'ud laugh at me. For, by the Lord God, I'll make sich an example of Kerins, an' all belonging to him, an' all that have anythin' to say to him, that it'll be remimbered in the parish as long as the ould castle shtands there forninst the sea."

"Take care!" said Wycherly carelessly, "he carries his shooting-irons with him wherever he goes, and a bullet goes faster than a shillelah."

"An' there's somethin' faster than a bullet," said Dick savagely, as he moved away, "*and it makes no noise.*"

"He's a dangerous man," said Wycherly to Pete, as Dick passed out of sight. "I shouldn't care to meet him in the dark, if he had anything against me. But look here, Pete! He was hinting at our own affairs just before you came up. The chase is getting hot again, and I think I shall take another run to sea."

"The last didn't serve you much," said Pete. "I told you you made a mistake in leaving the old man too much alone. You have given in too easily. You may not win the wife you hoped for; but, as the people about here say, 'There's as good fish in the sea as ever were caught.' But there's only one Rohira."

"True!" said Wycherly, musing. "But you don't know how stubborn the old man is. He never liked me. Everything is coming out against me. And we are certainly in some danger now. There are spies somewhere. You heard what Duggan said about Kerins and his talk when he's in liquor."

"Yes," said the "little father," "Kerins stands in everybody's way."

And the remark led him into a mood of musing, from which the impatient Wycherly aroused him.

"I suppose you've heard that Jack has been very unwell and is coming home?"

"Yes! I have heard," said Pete.

"He may get over this, or he may probably be ordered abroad," said Wycherly. "I was thinking that perhaps we might get a message from the — sea-spirit to my father in connexion with Jack."

"A message? Yes!" said Pete, not comprehending.

"I mean a word from — my — my —," the horrid words seemed to choke him, "my mother to the effect that this illness of Jack's is a punishment, a retribution, or something for my father's treatment of me."

"Ha!" said Pete, grasping at the idea.

"You know, Pete," said Wycherly, appealing to the selfish nature of the man, "you and yours can never be safe under a stranger. If Jack comes in, out you go. If I can take my rightful place as master here, you and the old woman and your children are safe forever."

"Unless I am juggled," said Pete, with a shrug of the shoulders, "which is as likely as not. But," he added, his dark eyes kindling into a blaze as he spoke, "I won't go down without bringing many with me."

"That's quite right!" said Wycherly. "But the quietest way of working our point is the best, so long as we can pursue it. If we can wind up this little business of ours, which is becoming more dangerous every day, and if we can get the old man to change his mind, all will be well. I look upon Jack as already out of my way."

"The old woman foretold it," said Pete. "The evening these young ladies were here, Judith told them that the spirit of his mother was calling him to come."

"Ha! very good," said Wycherly. "Let us have another message from the dead, and all will be right with father."

"I'll see!" said Pete. Then, as if another idea was preoccupying him, he said:

"Which of the two is the more dangerous for us — Kerins or Duggan?"

Wycherly reflected a little.

"Kerins, certainly! Duggan is little better than a fool! Have you got away the last of that ensilage?"

"Not all. There are a few packages still left. But all's right now. That pressed hay was a good idea. There isn't the slightest suspicion."

He turned away, muttering:

"Pity you haven't more nerve. What a fortune was in our hands."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE SEA-SPIRIT VANISHES

CHRISTMAS came in that year, not softly and muggily, with down-hanging skies and weeping clouds, bringing to many lips the old adage: "A green Christmas makes a fat churchyard"; but it came in its white ermine and diamonds of frost and white pearls of icicles pendent from slated roof and lowly thatch; and the snowy raiment stretched down thick and soft, from the roofs of Rohira along the steep slope that plunged downward to the sea, whose dark expanses, unflecked even by the foam of breakers, extended in one unbroken line towards the melancholy horizon. Picturesque and coldly beautiful as it was, there was an aspect of sadness and loneliness around it, as of a land of death and a sea of desolation; where the imagination could hardly conjure up the dream of departed summers, or summers yet to be, but now coiled up and hidden beneath the fierce frown of a wintry landscape.

So thought Jack Wycherly, as he walked from the fire to the window, from the window to the fire, gazing into the latter as if he saw there his life and fortunes crumbling into white ashes under the blaze of destiny, and watching the dreary prospect from the window, as one who was studying a scene which he was not to see again. He was deeply depressed. Conscious of great powers, and with that consciousness confirmed by the verdict of his superiors, he had been pushing along the paths of his profession with all that buoyancy and hope that belong to gifted and impassioned youth. He saw a great career opened before him, leading on to honours and emoluments,

and terminating only at the highest pinnacle of earthly success. And now, suddenly, there trickles across that sunlit path a tiny stream of blood; and the whole vision is blotted out forever. For he knew quite enough of medical science to understand that he was now drifting into that state where medical skill was practically unavailing; and all that could be done was to avert the evil day. And so the young student strode from the fire to the window, from the window to the fire, his dreary thoughts broken only by the harsh, dry cough, which instantly brought out the handkerchief and the terrible inquisition, was blood there?

Edward Wycherly had left the house and had gone no one knew where, except perhaps Pete the Gypsy. Whether it was a second or third angry altercation he had with his father, or that he dreaded meeting the victim of his drunken passion, he had fled the place; and the common report, "Gone to sea," had to satisfy the imagination of those who knew nothing of the many secrets of his life.

"I am afraid," said Dr. Wycherly, coming into the room where Jack was striding up and down, "we shall have a lonely Christmas. I was expecting a letter from Dion. He ought to have written at least at such a time. We are rather a scattered flock now."

Jack strode up and down the well-worn carpet in silence. Then he went to the window.

"Most families are scattered abroad at Christmas time," he said.

"Of course," said his father, plunging his hands deep into the pockets of his velvet jacket, "that is the case where the young are grown up and have left the nest. Although I don't like the fellow at all, I'm half sorry Ned didn't remain over the New Year."

Jack coughed slightly at the window and looked at his handkerchief.

"There is no sign of blood?" said his father, who saw the action.

"No!" said Jack. "And I know it is foolish to be so nervous about it. But when one has got a bad fright, it sticks to him."

"I still can't bring myself to believe that it was entirely constitutional, as your doctors say. I don't believe the lung could have softened so much without some symptoms revealing themselves. I'm sure it was some accident. You pushed against something, or strained yourself in some way. And you know that doesn't count for much."

"I'm afraid you are too sanguine, father," Jack replied. "I don't deceive myself. The symptoms are unmistakable."

"That means you're going abroad also?" said his father querulously. "If phthisis reveals itself, this would be no climate for you to dwell in."

And the white, dismal landscape and the steel-gray sky and the melancholy ocean seemed to reply: "Yes! This is no place for an invalid. Let him go, and as speedily as possible!"

That evening after dinner the doctor introduced the subject again.

"Strange," he said, "not a line as yet from Dion. One would think he could not forget the old home at such a time."

The old butler in the faded coat had put a few sprigs of holly here and there in heavy vases on the mantel-piece, in crevices on the great massive sideboard, in the heavy mouldings of picture-frames which held the cracked and crumbling portraits of bygone Wycherlys. But nothing, not even the heavy silver, nor the crystal of the cut-glass, nor the masses of violets and early primulas that filled the room with the odours of spring, could dissipate the gloom that hung down on that dark chamber and seemed to interpenetrate every nook and cranny of it, even to the inmost recesses of the human hearts that beat there.

"Strange," said the old doctor, as if he were unravel-

ling the threads of several incidents that had occurred during the day and was trying to frame something coherent from them, "strange that old woman — that old gypsy woman, Judith, challenged me to-day in the hall and told me that the spirit of my dead wife would come no more. She spoke in that prophetic manner she assumes sometimes, as if she had direct communication with the Unseen. I tried to shake it off — the spell, I mean — the fascination she seems to exercise over me when she assumes that style of talking."

"She's a thorough schemer and humbug," said Jack Wycherly hotly. "I am ever so sorry, father, that you allowed that vicious family to remain on your estate. I trace all the evils that have befallen our family to their presence."

"That's quite an absurd prejudice," said his father moodily. "They are harmless, if rude; and then they always seemed to be a link with the dear dead past. They have always told me when the spirit of my dear wife appeared to haunt the dear old spot that was so much beloved by her. I shouldn't know it but for them. An ordinary Irish family would be scared and frightened. Not so these people! I suppose," he went on dreamily, "it is their Egyptian origin, their handling strange and mysterious things for centuries, that makes them familiar with the powers that lie outside our vision. But it has been for these few years a strange consolation to know that your dear dead mother was not cut away from us forever, but came as a kind of sea-spirit to show us that the things of eternity had not altogether cut her away from sympathy with those whom she loved in the flesh."

There was a sharp struggle in the boy's mind as to whether he would dissipate that foolish, if fond, dream forever, or leave his father in happy ignorance of the deception. But he inquired further:

"And Jude thinks the apparition has ceased and will not trouble the slumbers of the people again?"

"Yes! But that's a harsh way of putting it, Jack.

The spirit of your mother, the sea-spirit, has troubled no one — nay, has been a consolation to many and a strengthening of fainting faith."

"But did Jude give any reason why this apparition should cease?" asked his son. "Why now, and not at any time these past four or five years?"

"Yes!" said his father uneasily. "She seems to hint that it is because the natural heir of the house has — gone away and will not return, and because —"

But here he stopped, unwilling to hurt the feelings of the stricken boy.

"You mean, dear father," said Jack, "that my mother's wraith, as you believe, has departed in anger, because there is no longer an heir to Rohira?"

"Not in anger! I didn't say in anger, Jack," said his father piteously. "But, you see, very naturally, when the fortunes of our house are falling into decay, the good angel of the house deserts it."

The boy coughed slightly and looked at his handkerchief.

"We must now," said his father, noticing the gesture, "or immediately after the holidays, ascertain if there are bacilli in that sputum. I don't think myself there are. In fact, from experience I would rather judge that there are not. These hemorrhages, and you had only one, Jack, are not the dangerous symptoms. They are quite compatible with perfect health. But should there be any symptoms of phthisis, we must get you away to a warm, dry climate — South Africa, by preference, for some time. But there's time enough, time enough."

"That's the opinion of our senior surgeon, too," said Jack Wycherly. "It is not a pleasant prospect, but we have to submit to our destinies."

The poor lad was suffering under violent emotion and he went over and lay down on a sofa near the fire, thinking of many things.

Down at the presbytery the same three persons who were assembled together that Christmas night four or

five years ago, the old blind pastor, his curate, and his niece, were also met together on this Christmas night. The room was unchanged in appearance. One would have thought it was the identical fire that was leaping and sparkling in the grate. It was certainly the same picture of the Holy Family that looked down upon the living, as it was the self-same carpet, though more worn and frayed, that was beneath their feet. The self-same lamp threw its mellow, softened light on the table and lit up the long rows of leather-covered books, that seemed never to have been removed from their places. But the living were changed, fearfully changed, even to their own eyes.

Darkness, almost absolute, had come down on the old priest's eyes, which were shaded by glasses so darkly blue that they seemed black in the lamp-light. His hair had thinned to baldness and his cheeks were more deeply furrowed, either by anxious thought or the very absence of that intellectual exercise which alone could dissipate it. His strong fierce temper had degenerated into a kind of gentle moroseness, which was seldom lighted up by the old flashes of humour that made his companionship so delightful. His sun was sinking under clouds, growing deeper and darker as they approached the horizon.

His curate was also changed, not so much in appearance as in thought and experience. Yet the new spiritual life he had been leading had matured and ripened his intellect so far that it became apparent in manner, which, soft and refined as ever, had yet lost that elasticity and boyish eagerness that had formerly characterized him. He had become sober, without being dull; calm without being stolid; and there was a certain halo of peace around his eyes and forehead that spoke of a spiritual life not altogether sequestered from human interests and passions.

The change in Annie O'Farrell was only the change from girlhood to womanhood, a little emphasized by her training and habits, and also by some new strange experi-

ence that seemed to be kindling itself in her heart and that gave to life a new idealization and pleasure, and not a little pain.

She had put aside her nurse's uniform and was dressed in a close-fitting gray costume that seemed to suit her tall and graceful figure. Her coiled hair marked her entrance into the sphere of womanhood, and her profession seemed to have stamped on her manner a certain decision and promptness, that at once demanded obedience and respect. Somehow, these excellent qualities seemed also to detract a little from feminine gracefulness and helplessness, so true is it that no accomplishment or grace is acquired except at the cost of something corresponding. But this apparent loss vanished on acquaintance, and the old, gentle, playful, feminine if firm nature revealed itself through the cloak of professional strength and severity.

There seemed, too, to be a slight restraint hovering over this family party on this Christmas night — a restraint which only wore away when the icy barriers melted down on closer fellowship. The long absence of Annie had driven her uncle back into the old impatience of society and love of solitude, which even now was unwillingly broken, and the spiritual and ascetic life which Henry Liston had been leading seemed to make even such jejune and harmless felicities foreign to his tastes. And Annie had been so much accustomed now to the daily helping and tending on the helpless, and she had seen so much of the more easy and less restrained habits of mind of gentlemen of the world, that an uneasy feeling crept down on her spirits, and there was an incipient yearning for the fuller felicities of life.

But all these little wisps of cloud vanished as the Christmas night wore on and the topics of human interest came up to be discussed.

"Do you know, sir," said Henry Liston, as the name "Rohira" turned up in the conversation, "I think there's a crisis approaching in the affairs of that house?"

"Why do you think so?" asked the pastor, but in a tone of little interest.

"Well, it seems slightly absurd to say it, but the report has gone abroad that the ghost of Dunkerrin Castle has disappeared and is not to return."

"How? Have you banished her to the bottom of the Red Sea for seven years, and is she so offended that she will not return again?"

"No!" replied his curate. "I am happy to say I have had nothing to do with the lady. But the report has gone abroad and is widely believed. The credulous seem to take it for a sign of 'something,' as they say. The more sceptical also take it as a sign of 'something,' — more concrete, however."

"Well, now, although you are Irish enough to love an enigma, suppose you explain it. Not that it much matters," said the old man, passing his hand across his forehead wearily, "these things are of very passing interest now."

"It is only the usual foolish village gossip," said Henry Liston. "I think our friend, Jude, has so pulled the ropes that the spectre will not be seen again; and she has had it conveyed to our good friend, the doctor, that it will forebode the annihilation of his house."

Annie was now listening with all her ears, although she said nothing and tried to persuade herself that the subject did not concern her.

"It is wonderful," continued Henry, speaking to his pastor, "how the dear old doctor clings to that singular delusion about his wife's appearance. I suppose it is almost unique, at least in the case of an educated man."

"I have seen more remarkable delusions," broke in Annie, "far more harrowing fancies or visions, and always in the case of the educated and intelligent. The ruder people accept the stories of others, but seem never to come under the spell of such delusions themselves."

"Well, that is singular," said Henry. "I thought the thing first impossible, and then, unprecedented. But

the doctor is now fully persuaded that the spirit of his dead wife has disappeared forever in anger, or as an omen of some impending trouble."

"Why in anger?" asked his pastor. "What could have enraged the ghost?"

"Oh, the quarrel between the eldest boy and his father," said Henry Liston, "or rather, the repeated quarrels, culminating in his final disinheritance and departure."

"I thought he had gone back to sea again and failed in his attempt," said the old man.

"Yes! He was away for a considerable time, but he seems always to have some great attraction here. But he's gone now forever. And then, as I have mentioned, the younger lad, Dion, has never been heard from, and Jack, the fair-haired lad (you remember him, Annie, he was your first pupil) is at home in a hopeless decline."

"Not quite hopeless," said Annie O'Farrell. "He was at our hospital and the doctors give hope, if he can be induced to go abroad."

"They say, that is the common report has it," added Henry Liston, "that there was a quarrel, some street-scuffle between students, and that he sustained a rupture in the lung."

"What was the exact cause of quarrel between Dr. Wycherly and his son?" asked Annie O'Farrell evasively.

"The real cause was his wild life and the report that had reached the doctor's ears from certain sources that he was engaged in illegal work. There is no secret about the fact that smuggling to a large extent was going on along this coast, and I don't think there is much doubt now that Wycherly and Pete the Gypsy were engaged in it. A sudden swoop was made on the castle four years ago by a clever officer, but he was disappointed. They were too well prepared. But the report came to the old man's ears, and you know with these people a violation of the law is the worst of crimes. There were some

angry scenes between the father and son; and young Wycherly has left — it is supposed forever."

"It is sad to see a family broken up so completely," said Annie, as if speaking to herself. "And there was such brilliant promise. Dion has never been heard of?"

"Never, they say. Some think he is ranching in America; some say he is farming at the Cape. Many think he is dead — lost at sea."

"It is very sad," said Annie musingly, "to think of that old man, who has been so good and kind, left desolate in his old age; and perhaps he will live to see Rohira in the hands of strangers. Isn't it hard to see an old name passing away? I'm sure Mary would be sorry to hear it."

"Mary has said good-bye to all human associations," said Henry Liston. "She has forgotten all these things long ago."

"I cannot believe that," said Annie, who had a strong prejudice against that kind of sanctity. "Her last letter to me mentioned Rohira and recalled the few happy evenings we spent there."

"Do you know it strikes me that you two are mighty solemn for young people?" said the pastor. "I'm just thinking how sober you have both become since that first Christmas you both spent here. What is it?"

But they could not answer. And in like sober, if not sombre, fashion the hours crept by to bed-time; and Henry had to get out his trap for his journey homeward.

It was still early in the night, and Annie, kept long awake by thinking of the many things about which they had been conversing, had sunk into an uneasy slumber, when the very unusual pealing of the hall-bell, pulled violently by some excited person, woke her up to perfect consciousness. After a long interval, during which the jangling of the bell never ceased, she heard the hall-door opened and a loud conversation in the hall. And presently her uncle, who had risen from bed and answered the bell, tapped at her door.

"Are you awake, Annie?" he said.

"Yes! What's the matter?" she asked.

"A messenger from Dr. Wycherly that his son has had another violent hemorrhage and requesting you to go up. I'd just as soon you wouldn't go!"

"How can I help it, Uncle?" she replied. "I suppose there's no other nurse available; and this may be a matter of life or death."

"Please yourself!" he said reluctantly. "The doctor's carriage is at the door. I suppose you'll hardly return before morning."

"I dare say not!" she replied.

"I don't like it! I don't like it!" he murmured, moving away. "Oh, why did I ever bring them here?"

CHAPTER XXXV

UNCLE AND NIECE

THE New Year dawned, cold and wet and chill. The Christmas snows had disappeared, except here and there in nooks and clefts, for the sea-air had come in and hovered above the fleecy drifts and breathed so softly on them that they had not the hardihood to remain longer, but gently melted away and relieved the suffocation of grass and herb that had been pining in the darkness beneath. But the skies were lowering and heavy, and leaning too closely with their weeping burdens on the earth; and the whole landscape and sea vista was tinted in a melancholy grayness of colour, that made men sit down and think, rather than stir themselves to work within or without of doors.

Gray was the old Dunkerrin keep against the steel face of the sea; gray were the granite walls without, where they held up their faces to be lashed by wind and wave, gray were the walls within, except where they were blackened with the smoke that crept out from the gypsies' fire and coiled itself round and round the great stone chamber and lingered on the arched roof and left it darkened and grimy with its sooty paint. Gray, too, was the face of the wrinkled hag bent over the peat and wood fire upon the hearth — gray, with an ashen pallor as of a life that was consuming itself in a fierce struggle of overmastering passion.

The gloomy day wore on to evening, and the deep shades drew down at four o'clock, shutting out all light from that dark chamber except a few feeble rays of twilight that lingered still about the narrow slits that served

for windows. The dusky brood of children were still out upon the cliffs playing their noisy games; the old woman gazed musingly but anxiously into the fire; Cora, the ugly gypsy girl, was munching apples in a corner, seated on a kitchen table and swinging her legs to some imaginary Romany ditty.

At last the old woman woke up as if from a reverie and without turning round she addressed her granddaughter:

"The little father is late to-night. Dost thou hear any noise of his coming?"

Without moving or making a single sign of interest, the girl went on munching apples, just pausing a little to mumble:

"None. Wouldn't be surprised if he fell into the hands of the engroes and found the darbies on his wrists."

"Why dost thou say such a thing?" cried the old hag with the addition of an oath and an opprobrious name.

"Because his pal or someone else has peached," said the girl, without moving from her place or resenting the insult.

"His pal? Wycherly, dost thou think?" asked the old woman anxiously and turning round to face her hopeful grandchild.

"Yes! or I'm nashkado," said the girl.

The old woman turned back, muttering something and looking steadily at the fire.

A little later on the sound of hoofs was heard, as they crept down the boreen that led to the castle, and the heavy cart jolted over the rough stones, or tore through the bushes and brambles that closed in in wild profusion across the narrow passage. Then the stable door was opened, the animal unharnessed and housed for the night, and Pete came in, calm and unconcerned as usual.

The old woman received him so effusively that he expressed his surprise. She explained the suspicions of his hopeful daughter.

"I didn't know but that you would be in the nashky to-night," she said. "And we —"

"The engro is not kidded yet," said the little father, "that could match a Romany chal."

And lifting up the heavy cover of an iron pot, he flung it with all his strength at his daughter's head. She quietly dodged the missile and, picking up a couple of apples, she passed out into the night that had now fallen, chanting in the most unconcerned manner:

The Romany chi
And the Romany chal,

and calling to the dusky little savages who were playing around the cliffs to come back to their grandbebee.

"She said," said the old granddame, shuffling nearer the fire with the sense of satisfaction of one who has escaped a danger, "that the young master had peached! Can that be true?"

"How could it be true?" said the little father. "I carried my cargo to-night through the midst of the engroes, bade them Good-night! saw it in the wagon, safely consigned. What more?"

"Nothing more," she said. "How is the young master to-night?"

"Better and worse!" said the little father. "Better because the bleeding has stopped; worse because he is craving for a sight of that girl and she cannot always be there."

"Ha!" cried the old woman with a certain note of exultation in her voice. "She has had enough of the tribe, I wot. And yet," she continued, gazing intently into the red ashes that dropped here and there on the hearth from the blazing logs, "I have a vision; and some day the dark dove will nestle beneath the roof of Rohira."

"Thou art dreaming, little mother," said the filial Pete. "Edward is gone never to return; Dion is lost and never to be found; Jack is a doomed lad. Rohira will pass

into the hands of the stranger and the very name of it will be changed and forgotten."

"Pete, you are a fool and no better than a gorgio," said the old woman. "But why didn't you kill Kerins's juggal?"

"Because no drow that was ever brewed could sicken him," said Pete. "And he knows and suspects me, the damned beast. Some day, I fear, he'll fly at me."

"It would be well if dog and man were out of our way," said the old woman. "Cora, the slut, who knows everything, says we're peached upon. It can't be the young master and yet I wouldn't trust him. But Kerins — I have watched him and I have little faith in him."

"No matter," said Pete airily. Nothing but the hangman's noose dangling over his head could disturb him. "We have only one or two journeys more. And then we quit. And grandbebee! We, the tinker-gypsies, have not done so badly after all."

"No!" she said. "We shall be remembered well! Go call that hussy and the beebes from the cliff. She's only fit to be a Christian!"

And she spat into the fire with disgust.

It was quite true that Jack Wycherly was better and worse. The violent hemorrhage that had come on in the early hours of St. Stephen's morning had been checked by powerful remedies, but he had been confined to bed and was suffering from great debility. And he was feverish and restless, partly because he saw that he could not well resume his studies, but principally because he craved and hungered after the presence of the nurse, whose light touch and sympathetic attentions seemed now to have become indispensable to his recovery. She had remained by his bedside all that dreary night, watching, side by side with the old doctor, who was half-distracted with grief and terror, for the cessation of the dangerous symptoms. It was only after breakfast she was allowed to return to her uncle's.

He was in no agreeable mood. Quite ignorant of the modern methods of medical skill and science and still more ignorant of the etiquette that now obtains in the profession, he thought there was a certain impropriety in the summoning of a young girl to attend at night the bedside agonies of a young gentleman. Quite unaware of hospital practice, he rather resented the idea of her being summoned to a private patient; and he thought there was a certain want of fitness and delicacy in the whole thing that called for comment on his part.

"I don't know, Annie," he said when he had made some ordinary inquiries about the boy's condition, "what are your ordinary duties, but it seems to me that you have gone as far in this matter as maidenly delicacy will allow."

Annie opened her eyes in amazement.

"I know I want a right good sleep, Uncle," she said. "But what in the world has maidenly delicacy to do in the matter? Why, it is my profession."

"Of course, but surely there are distinctions in your profession. There are certain rules or laws," he said, reverting to his old ideas, "binding all professions, and in yours there must be distinctions. I mean you have no right to be called upon to attend patients indiscriminately."

"We acknowledge no distinctions," she replied with a certain independence that grated upon him. "Our business, our vocation," she went on proudly, "is to save human life and alleviate human suffering. Place, time, circumstances do not concern us."

He was silent for a few moments. He felt he was in the whirl of a revolution that he could neither stop, nor stay. Events were crowding down upon him and his old conceptions of inexorable laws and sweeping them away into oblivion.

"But," he said at length, clinging to his old ideas even while he felt them dragged down the tide of change, "there are certain proprieties, Annie — certain minor

moralties, that have at all times to be observed. I admit the vast progress and utilities of the science of medicine, but there are tacit rules — little scholia, or consequences, from Christian teaching, that make it undesirable for a young lady — ”

“You have never seen an operation, Uncle?” she said.

“Never, thank God!” he replied.

“Well, now,” she continued, “let me be candid. There are certain shocks in the beginning, certain things that make you shiver, but you get used to everything. And then you begin to understand that in our profession there is only one thing considered — that is, as I have said, to save human life and relieve human suffering.”

He saw there was no use in prolonging the argument, so he said testily:

“I don’t understand and I’m not going to argue the matter further. But,” — he stopped suddenly, as if he dreaded to go too far, for now he felt how powerless he was becoming, how unequal to the unseen forces that seemed to be conspiring from all sides against him. And yet how could he be silent?

“I was about to say,” he continued, with an attempt at the old peremptoriness that almost broke down, “that I have to consider my own position, Annie. We are living here among a backward, primitive people, who do not understand modern methods; and after all we must yield to their prejudices. And I fear very much — ”

Here he stopped. He could not hurt the feelings of the girl who was everything to him in the world.

“I think I know what you mean, Uncle,” she said, “and it would be most ungrateful of me to embarrass you in any way. But I think the time has come when the people should be taught to rise above these prejudices, and there is only one way of teaching them and that is to defy them.”

“That cannot be done,” he said. “There! we’ve had enough of the matter, and I don’t want, Annie, that

anything should come between us now, when my time on earth is so short."

"Don't say that, Uncle," she said as the tears started to her eyes. "You have many years before you yet, and, when I have done with these professional studies, I shall come back and nurse you to the end."

He shook his head. And, after a pause, during which she seemed to be debating the prudence of what she was going to say, she said quietly:

"I shall not go to Rohira again!"

But in the late afternoon one of the servants came down to beg of her to go up, if it were only for a few minutes.

"For, oh, Miss," said the girl earnestly, as she saw Annie hesitating, "if you could only see the young master and how he turns round and looks every time the door opens and then turns back with the tears in his eyes and a look on him, as if his heart was breaking; an' if you could only hear him, Miss, when he wakes up out of his sleep and looks round and says 'Annie!' 'Annie!' just for all the world, Miss, as if a child were crying for his mother — why, Miss, you'd go to the end of the world to help him."

"You know, Nellie, that I was up all night and am tired and worn out!"

"Of course, you are, Miss, though you're looking as fresh as a daisy this morning; but sure, Miss, this is only for a few minutes. And the poor doctor, Miss, is heart-broke an' he said to me, 'Nellie,' he said, 'I'm ashamed to be troubling Miss O'Farrell after such a long night, but what am I to do? It is hard to hear Jack calling for her and not to please him.'"

Still she hesitated. She had given a spontaneous promise, although it was exacted by affection, and she was torn by a conflict of feeling such as she had never experienced before. Suddenly she turned around and went straight to her uncle's door.

"The doctor has again sent for me," she said, "and this poor boy is calling piteously for me. I must go!"

"You can please yourself!" he said.

So she went that day and every day until Jack Wycherly was convalescent. And her uncle never alluded to it again, but she knew that a great gulf had yawned between them. And she was very soon made aware that busy tongues were tampering with her name in the parish; and that her ministrations of mercy were tortured into deep designs of ambition, or at least flagrant violations of that secret code which draws the invisible but impassable line between delicacy and forwardness or, as her uncle would say, the things that are within the law and the things that pass to their own retribution outside its impregnable pale.

CHAPTER XXXVI

CORA BEWITCHED

NOWHERE did these thoughts rankle more deeply, nowhere were these things discussed so savagely, as in the cabin of the Duggans. Every event seemed to be leading up to an accumulation of disappointment that was hardly to be borne by such fierce and vindictive spirits; and these disappointments in some mysterious manner appeared to originate in the voluntary or unconscious movements of the priests. Things seemed to have reached a culmination of agony when all preparations were made for the marriage of Kerins to Martha Sullivan, and when under the very eyes of the Duggans vans of furniture were brought from the railway station to embellish the home of the bride. It was hard enough to lose Crossfields just at the time when Kerins's intemperance seemed to make certain his ruin and their acquisition of the farm; and now he had actually swept from the side of Dick Duggan the fairest girl in the parish, whom he had already regarded as his own. His grief and disappointment were so terrible that even the old woman, his mother, was won over to his side; and, although her deep religious feelings would never allow her to take part in any unholy remarks about the priests, she still felt, in that strange instinctive but utterly irrational manner so common amongst the ignorant and uneducated, that they all had a grievance against their clergy. Hence the matter was warmly and angrily discussed about their hearth these dark, winter days, whilst a few fields away Jack Wycherly's life seemed ebbing softly onward towards the unmeasured shores of eternity.

"Fitter for him keep that galivanter of a niece of his at home," said the old man one night, as they were talking about some altar denunciation of a scandal made the Sunday previous by the old blind pastor. "Begor, because she's his niece she can do what no other girl in the parish dare do. What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and begor whin he won't spare anyone else he oughtn't spare her."

"If it was a poor man's son or daughter was spittin' blood, I wondher would me fine lady be so ready to spind her nights and days be their side?" said his daughter.

"Faix, you may be sure she wouldn't, nor would he allow her unless she was well paid for it," echoed one of the boys.

"Perhaps she has her eye on the place," said the old man with a certain irony. "Quarer things happen and sure we ought to be glad to see them Prodestans hunted from the counthry and Catholics takin' their place."

"What are you sayin' about Prodestans and Catholics?" said Dick Duggan savagely, as he turned in from the door, and his dark face grew more sallow and the stubby black moustache on his upper lip seemed to bristle with anger.

"Nothin', nothin'," said his father. "Only people do be saying that quarer things have happened than that she should be at Rohira."

"What 'ud take her there?" said Dick. "Didn't she give the go-by to Masther Ned and sure this poor dying angashore will never come in for Rohira."

"Maybe she's lookin' afther the ould docthor himself," said his sister. "Sure the wife's sperrit has gone away, banished by the priest to the bottom of the Red Say for as long as he wants to hould her there."

There was a burst of sarcastic laughter at this sally, which was interrupted when the latch of the half-door was unceremoniously lifted and Pete the Gypsy came in.

He never used the usual salutations of the country and his presence never boded any good to the household, but he was always welcome because he had all the news of

the country on his tongue and had a dry quaint way of communicating it.

He went over coolly to the turf fire and lighted his pipe, merely saying:

"Your par'n, Ma'am!"

Then he sat on the hob and smoked calmly. After a little while the old man said:

"We were just talking of the young master whin you kem in, Pete. How is he?"

"Better because worse!" said the gypsy sententiously.

"Begor, 'twould take your mother to bate that," said the old woman, who hated the whole tribe.

"I mean," said Pete, "that the bleeding is stopped, thanks to his skilful nurse, but the boy is doomed. He cannot get better. He must go abroad."

"I hope he'll take a wife wid him," said Dick Duggan savagely.

"No!" said the gypsy coolly after a pause. "Although he ought; or rather she ought to take him, for it was for her sake he got his death-blow!"

This was interesting, so the whole family began to group themselves around the speaker, except Dick Duggan, who kept apart as if the subject did not interest him, but who nevertheless kept eyes and ears open for the narrative.

But Pete was rather leisurely in his movements, at least in his hours of recreation, and only asked curiously:

"Have ye not heard it?"

"Dom your blood," said the old man in a passion, "you know dom well we didn't. You and thim can keep yere sacrets too well, although sometimes the best mended pot will lake."

The allusion to his ordinary trade as a tinker and his extraordinary calling as a smuggler would have raised the hair on an ordinary man. But Pete was not an ordinary man, but an extraordinary gypsy, and he held down his temper with a strong hand.

"True, friend," he said at length and it seemed with some significance, "it is well to be able to keep one's

secrets. The spoken word cannot be recalled. But," he added, dashing the ashes from his pipe, "this doesn't concern me and so ye may have it. It is only this. That Ned pursued this young lady, and a very beautiful lady she is, with his attentions; that she rejected them; that he followed her to the city and wanted Master Jack to tell him where he could meet her. Master Jack refused. There were hot words; and hot words generally end only in one way, eh, Dick? and Master Jack got the blow that has sped him on the way to the grave."

"And Masther Ned?"

"Has vanished and is not likely to return again."

"He's not much of a loss," said the old man.

"No-o!" said the gypsy. "He was a good young man, a very good young man; and he had money, a little money, just enough to buy and stock Crossfields."

"Crossfields? What the divil do you mane?" said Dick Duggan, coming over and eyeing the dark face of the gypsy.

"Mean?" said Pete coolly. "I mean that Masther Ned — don't be so angry, Dick, you'll have Crossfields yet — I foretell it! — wanted Kerins to sell out to him. He offered him six hundred, and — Kerins would sell, but then —"

He paused and left them eagerly expectant.

"But then the young lady wouldn't have him and he flung up Crossfields, Rohira, and everything. You'll never hear of him again!"

"Small loss!" said the old woman.

"And a good riddance!" said her husband.

"Certainly in one way," said the gypsy, as if interpreting their thoughts, "for if, as might have happened, Wycherly had secured Crossfields no power on earth could wrest it from him. When men of his class get hold of such things they hold on like bull-dogs. Now Kerins is different. He has only the grip of a child or a spaniel. Say, *Drop it!* and he lets go. Say, *Pass by that girl an' don't let me catch you speaking to her again!* And 'tis done."

"That's not the character he bears," said the old man. "People say he's a black man and he knows how to use his revolver."

Pete shrugged his shoulders and rose up to depart.

"That's because he's never met his match — I mean, the man that would stand up to him and give him one bad fright. If Ned Wycherly had been more lucky, he could as easy get Kerins to clear out of Crossfields as I could smoke a pipe. 'Tis a pity we haven't a gentleman there instead of a skunk. And now I hear he's bringing in the bonniest lass in the parish."

There was silence at these words. He had wrought their tempers up to that point where speech is useless.

"Well, good night!" he said. "There's enough of us to dance at the wedding."

He received no reply to the salutation, but went out heedlessly into the darkness. He knew well he was followed. The drawn face, and the gleaming eyes, and the dry lips of Dick Duggan had not escaped his observation, for unto that were all his cunning remarks directed.

He had not gone far when he heard his name called huskily and cautiously. He turned round and waited.

"Did ye mane all that ye said, Pete, about the Yank?" came the voice out of the darkness.

"Who's this? Oh, Dick! Did I mean what?"

"All you said about Kerins, damn you. You know well what I mane."

"Oh, never mind," said the gypsy carelessly. "The thing is settled now. It is too late to begin."

"Av I thought—" said Dick gloomily. But he stopped, unable to frame his ideas into words.

"If you thought what?" said Pete encouragingly.

"Av I thought that Martha would have him, I'd think no more of blowing out his brains than I would of shooting a dog."

"That's foolish talk, Dick," said the gypsy. "First and foremost, you have no firearms. Kerins saw after that when he sent the police to search. Second, you would

never have the courage to pull the trigger. Third, there's the hangman's noose and 'tis a necktie one doesn't care to wear again. Be said and led by me, Dick Duggan. Leave Kerins alone. And, as for that girl (I saw him walking with her yesterday down in the fields near her father's house), well, there's many another in the parish; and where are you going to bring her? Do you think she's going to wait for you until she is a gray old woman?"

"Pete!" said the dry tongue anxiously.

"Well. I must be off. The old woman will be sulky."

"They do be sayin'," said the dry voice in the darkness, "that ye are all clearin' out soon — out av the ould castle. Couldn't — couldn't the ould woman give the girl somethin' — somethin' —?"

"You mean to drab her?" said the gypsy.

"Drab? What's 'drab'?" said Dick.

"Why to 'drab' is to poison her. Why, of course, the old woman knows all herbs —"

"I didn't mane that, you gypsy blagard," said Dick. "An' you know I didn't mane it."

"What then did you mean?" said Pete. "We're a lawless lot enough, I suppose, so far as filching a chicken is concerned, but we have kept our hands from blood. That's only for Christians and gorgios."

"Begor, perhaps you're right," said Dick, afraid now that he had gone too far, "although that isn't the character ye bare. But sure I was only jokin'. I don't care a *thraneen* for Crossfields; and, as for the girl, why, there's as good fish in the say as ever was caught. An' I'm dom glad it is wan of ourselves and not a shoneen like Wycherly that houlds the ould place."

"Exactly," said Pete, moving away. "It only remains now that Kerins should have you as best man. I'll be speaking to him to-morrow or after and I'll tell him how nice and friendly ye all are since ye heard of his marriage."

The reply was lost in the darkness of the night and the distance, but if Pete could smile, and he never did, he

would smile at the sudden change in Dick's manner. He only tried to remember every word of their conversation as he went along, and he commanded his daughter to take down certain things on very dirty paper, as mnemonics for future use.

"You have been riling that boy again," said the old woman, as she leaned over the fire.

"No!" said Pete. "But on my honour, as an honest Romany chal, I say 'tis a shame that this juggal should win land and bride so easy."

"What is it to us, little father?" said his mother. "What is it to us? It behooves us to think where we shall pitch our tent next, for I tell you, these black walls choke me and I pine for the wood and the heath and the freedom of the Romany life. But, where shall we pitch our tent, that is the question for us, and not whether Dick will cut Kerins's throat or poison his wife that shall be?"

"You are right, bebee," said Pete admiringly, "you are always right. But may not these things, too, help the Romanys onward?"

"How? What to us are the squabbles of these folk? We shall be far from here before these things are settled."

"You are always wise, bebee," said her son. "Could we only get our legs loose from the mantrap now, and enough to take us onward to the Romany camp and out into the fields and mountains again, all would be well."

"Then, why not, little father?" asked the old woman querulously.

"Because the little father is more likely to find himself in the nashky," broke in the daughter, Cora. "I tell ye, but ye will not heed, that the engroes are on the prowl, and they are only waiting to get the leg as well as the foot into the mantrap, before they snap the spring."

The old woman snarled and cursed the girl, who seemed to find a certain delight in foretelling the ruin of her father. But the girl was heedless. It didn't seem to matter much to her.

"Whence have you got your information?" asked her father sternly.

"Pay me and I'll tell you!" she said.

The payment was the swish of his whip across the girl's back. She swore and went out.

"The devil has some information," said the gypsy to his mother. "But, if I can run in two or three bales more, I'll say quit. It's an exciting but uncanny trade. Ah, if that coward, Wycherly, had stood by me, what a fortune we'd have made. I owe a grudge to that girl for refusing him and to Kerins for keeping Crossfields."

"The clouds sank red to-night, little father," she said, "and the planet was a blotch of blood in the sky. I see strange figures moving down there in the valleys, where the logs are burning. There are two coming up towards each other out of the valley. And, look, the light has died out now and there is darkness, but still I see them moving slowly, as if driven on by fate. 'Sh! They approach. They meet. Look! One creeping spark is extinguished. The other moves on, on, on. Who are they?"

The girl, Cora, had come back and seemed to be listening intently.

"Duggan and Kerins, I suppose," he said carelessly, "or Jack Wycherly and his nurse; or the old grandbee and the bride that is to be. Did I tell you that Dick wanted you to brew a love philtre for the girl? Yes! Poor devil! 'Can Jude,' he said, 'brew something for me?' These were his words, 'Can Jude brew something for me?'"

"She can and she shall!" cried the girl, as if she were suddenly bewitched and gone mad. "I'll brew the philtre, yea, even I.

The Romany chi
And the Romany chal
Shall jaw tasaulor
To drab the bawlor,
And dook the gry,
Of the farming rve."

She went out singing and yelling into the night-air.

"The devil has got that girl," Pete said to his mother.

"There's something strange the matter with her."

But the old woman hung silent above the fire, only muttering:

"The time is come! Let us go! Let us go!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

A DREAD ORDEAL

DURING these sad days in the opening of the New Year, Annie O'Farrell was torn asunder under the agony of conflicting feelings. She had not openly disobeyed her uncle, to whom she was so much indebted, but she knew that he strongly disapproved of her visiting Rohira, and that there was a strain in their relations towards each other that might possibly widen into an open breach. She went every day to see the lad, who was clearly under sentence of death from the dread malady, and every day, as she pulled on her gloves and left her home, she felt she was giving great pain to her benefactor. Yet, she argued, how can I do otherwise? I have adopted a profession, which demands a sacrifice of feelings where the interests of suffering humanity are at stake. Would it not be selfish, nay cruel, to refuse the little help and sympathy I can render? She made up her mind on the matter, and if she ever hesitated, that piteous look of the stricken lad and his piteous cry "Annie!" would instantly strengthen her resolve to do everything in her power to relieve him. The gratitude of the old doctor, too, quaint and strange in his manner, but always a gentleman, was very touching. He said little, but by every sign and gesture he made it clear that he appreciated deeply the solicitude with which this young and accomplished nurse watched over her patient. He could not help noticing, too, how completely differences of religion were kept out of sight. There was but one guiding principle — kindness, humanity, charity. One day when Annie was coming into the room unexpectedly, she heard the old man saying:

"Oh, that God had given me such a daughter in my old age!"

She drew back the door gently and retired. But it was enough to prove how deep, if unspoken, was the grateful appreciation of her services in that Protestant household. And yet it was only her strong spirit that helped her to persevere in face of the tacit opposition of her uncle, and the knowledge, conveyed to her in a hundred ways, that "the people were talking about her."

As the days lengthened, Jack Wycherly was able to release his nurse and even to resume in part his studies at the hospital. But the cold of January, the icy showers of sleet, and the biting of the air at night made it soon evident that, if he were to escape death, he would have to run for his life. The senior surgeon, who was so deeply interested in him, peremptorily ordered him abroad, and after a consultation with the other members of the staff, all of whom liked the boy, it was decided that South Africa, with its dry, warm climate, was the one place on earth that gave hopes of arresting the ravages of the dread disease.

He promptly decided to go, but dare he go alone? He thought not. He was too weak, too depressed by his illness to face the ordeal of an ocean voyage. And then — suppose that this terrible hemorrhage should recur whilst at sea? He decided he would not go unless someone accompanied him. Needless to say — that someone was Annie.

It was pitiful during these days of doubt to see how the poor boy would follow with his eyes the figure of the girl, who now seemed indispensable to him, as she flitted through the wards, apparently unconscious of his anxiety; but in reality full of doubt and terror at the thought that he might ask her to accompany him abroad and that she would not refuse him. To his eager question to the senior surgeon, whether he might travel alone, the decided answer was given, "Most certainly not! You dare not travel without a skilled nurse." And he had

not concealed it. Two things then were clear. Jack Wycherly was to leave Ireland for the Cape on the first of February; and one of the hospital nurses was to accompany him. Many of the latter were eager to go. The novelty of the thing, the desire to see life, the pleasures of ocean travel, the wish to improve themselves, and to obtain larger knowledge of their profession, were excellent reasons for wishing to go abroad; and yet it was mutely understood that the dying boy cared but for one to be his nurse, companion, and friend. Yet he hesitated about asking her and the day of his departure was drawing near.

One afternoon the senior surgeon bluntly asked him:

"Well, Wycherly, have you made all arrangements? The sooner you get away from this infernal climate the better."

It was a bitterly cold afternoon, showers of sleet beating against the windows and a fierce wind howling along the streets and sweeping them free of pedestrians.

"Nearly all, sir," said Jack. "But I fear I cannot manage about the nurse."

"Why?" said the doctor impatiently. "Expense, is it?"

"No!" said the boy, with a blush spreading over his pale, hectic face. "Father has actually secured cabins in the 'Castle' Line. But —"

Here he stopped and the blush grew deeper on his face.

"Well?" said the surgeon. "What else? Can't you get the lady? I'd imagine they'd jump at the offer."

"I am afraid I cannot get the nurse I need most," said the boy.

"Who is she?"

"Miss O'Farrell. She took charge of me the night of my first hemorrhage and I have known her at home —"

"That's quite right," said the surgeon. "In your condition you will need sympathy and the feeling of confidence even more than skilful nursing. But why has Miss O'Farrell refused? That was selfish of her."

"I haven't asked her," said the boy.

"And why not? The time is closing in; she'll be delighted to go. You don't expect she is going to proffer her services?"

"It is not that, sir!" said the boy. "But I'm afraid she won't go and I don't like to risk a refusal. Besides, if Miss O'Farrell won't come with me, I shall stay at home to die."

"But — but," said the bewildered man of science. "I cannot understand. Why should Miss O'Farrell refuse to go? You say she's an old friend!"

"I'm sure she'd like to go," was the answer. "But Miss O'Farrell is a Roman Catholic, and you know they're very particular, very fastidious about the proprieties and all that."

"Oh, d——d nonsense!" said the irascible doctor. "There's no question of propriety or fastidiousness with us. We have to save human life — that's all!"

"I'm afraid," said Jack, mournfully shaking his head. "And then her uncle, her guardian, is a parish priest — a great scholar and theologian and all that! But a terrible stickler for law and the right thing and so on — a kind of Catholic Puritan, you know."

"Of course, I see. But is Miss O'Farrell dependent on him?"

"Partly. But she's deeply attached to him. And, if she comes with me, it means war. He'll never see her again. At least, I think that's what is in her mind."

"Well! well," said the surgeon. "The thing looks blue. But I'd advise you, Wycherly, to face the matter at once. Ask Miss O'Farrell, and if she doesn't consent, then ask someone else. But clear away from this infernal climate as soon as you can! Ugh!"

And the great man shuddered, as an icy blast threw pellets of snow against the windows, and the little streams, melting, flowed down and washed them clean. Probably this poor, doomed lad never underwent such an ordeal in his life as the one he faced that evening, when the

doctors had departed and he felt that he had to settle the matter finally, or decide to remain and die at home. In that silent, thoughtful, melancholy way in which such stricken souls move through the narrowing paths of life, he crept through the corridors, hoping to meet the girl on whose word his happiness now depended. He knew well he was no longer a prepossessing figure. All his masculine energy, which had created his masculine beauty, had ebbed away and left him a wilted and washed out skeleton. The great brown masses of auburn hair, which had clustered and curled so proudly on his broad, white forehead, were now matted heaps that fell down but could not conceal the deep valleys in his temples. His cheeks had fallen in, leaving the cheek-bones high and prominent. His lips were blue and dry. His hands were worn and lengthened; and his frame, shrunken and emaciated, seemed but a skeleton on which his garments were hung. He coughed slightly, always with the dread accompaniment of his handkerchief to his lips. He felt lonely, miserable, unhappy, dreading, yet seeking this interview with the one being, who alone could shed upon his desolate path a little ray of hope and love.

He walked up and down the long corridor of the hospital under the gas-jets, watching and listening for the opening of every door, in the hope that the one face and figure he desired to see might appear. Now and again, at the sound of a bell, a nurse would appear, glide swiftly along the corridor, exchange a kind word with the stricken student, and pass on. But to all appearances Annie O'Farrell had vanished. Then he began to ask himself, could he be mistaken, and was she on night duty. But he knew this was not the case. At last he was about to leave for his lodgings, when, on turning around, he came face to face with the girl.

She said a little word of kindness, walked slowly by his side a little distance, and was then about to pass into another ward, when he arrested her with the one word:

! "Annie!"

She stood still, re-arranging some utensils she held in her hands, until he said:

"Would you spare me one moment and walk a few steps with me?"

She at once turned around and slowly accompanied the weak footsteps of the boy. He moistened his dry lips and said with a tremor in his voice:

"Annie, you know I'm ordered abroad?"

"Yes," she replied, looking straight before her, not daring to look at the white face that was now drawn down with the pain of great anxiety.

"Would it be too much to expect — that is, would you do me and father the favour — Annie, will you go with me?"

She started violently, although she expected the question, and then she said quietly:

"Impossible, Jack. I would do anything to help you, but that is impossible."

"I expected to hear you say so," he replied gently but sadly. "It was too much to hope for. I know all the difficulties and I admit they are insurmountable. But it was my last hope. I shall die at home now."

"Don't say that!" she cried, alarmed. "The doctors give you a chance for life by ordering you abroad. I know you need a nurse — a trained nurse, but any of the nurses — Miss Fortescue, Miss Langton, Miss O'Reilly — any of them will be delighted to be asked."

"Perhaps so!" he replied. "But I shall not go unless you come with me!"

"Now, that's foolish nonsense, Jack," she said almost impatiently. "I know it is the result of your weak condition. The moment you are on board the steamer all that will vanish and you know you can rely on any of the nurses here."

"Of course," he said. "But my mind is made up. You won't come?"

He coughed slightly, took out his handkerchief, drew

it across his lips, and looked anxiously at it. The little action touched her and she had to look away to hide her tears.

"You know my difficulties, Jack," she said, secretly wiping her eyes. "It is cruel — no, I don't mean that — but it is unfair to press me. You know how my uncle, old and blind, will feel; and then you know how those wretched people down there will talk. It will kill him!"

"I know right well I'm selfish," he replied, "brutally selfish, but I suppose it is my malady. But I have the most positive assurances, Annie, from Doctor Stanihurst, and you know he is at the head of his profession, that in the public mind there is absolutely nothing indelicate, or imprudent, in any skilled nurse accompanying a poor devil that has been sentenced to death."

"Of course, that's true," said the nurse, "in the profession and amongst educated people. But you see, Jack — you know the class of people my uncle has to deal with and how their malice will twist and turn the thing to account against him."

"But," he said more cheerfully, for he felt he was gaining ground, "all wise people ignore the prejudices of the lower classes. Otherwise, the world could not go on. Surely we should not be influenced by the prejudices of the ignorant."

"I suppose we ought not to be," she replied. "But my uncle is a priest and has to live amongst his people; and he must be careful in these days when people, he says, are so critical."

"Perhaps! But somehow it seems to me, Annie, that the Lord Christ did not heed these things very much when He went about doing good."

The appeal was so unexpected that she could not reply.

"I know," he went on, "that a deeply religious girl as you are, Annie, must be shocked at my mentioning such a name at all. Of course, I have no more religion than a cow, but the little I have learned has taught me that. And, do you know, Annie, it is not altogether for

my own comfort I am begging you to come. But I know I am doomed. I must die in South Africa or elsewhere; and somehow I feel, you know, that I should want you with me at the last. You could pray for me, or read for me, and perhaps, when I go over, they won't shut the door altogether against me, if you knock a little. Do, Annie! Come! If the Lord Christ were here, He would say, Go! You cannot refuse Him!"

The appeal was irresistible and she felt now that she should accompany the doomed life and remain even unto the end. But, although she knew that it was certainly arranged, she felt it a duty to temporize and ease her conscience. After a few seconds' thought, she said:

"You've put things in a new light, Jack. But, because you have done so, I must consult those who are my own guides in matters of the kind. Give me a couple of days and I'll let you know. But oh! I shall have a frightful struggle with poor uncle. He'll never forgive me!"

Her anguish appeared so acute that the boy's heart was deeply touched and, gently laying his hand on her arm whilst she turned away her head, he said:

"There! Let us hear no more about it, Annie! I'm a perfect brute to torment you. And 'tis only for a few weeks of life, more or less! I'm utterly ashamed of myself to have pressed you. I'll end the matter now. And after all I can die happier at home."

But she shook her head.

"That cannot be," she said. "You must go to South Africa and I must go with you. It is Destiny!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

NATURE AND LAW

SHE did not make light of the ordeal before her. She had calculated everything; and yet it was only when she stood face to face with her trial that she realized its magnitude.

She consulted her confessor in the city next day, telling him candidly all her doubts and fears. He was struck at once by the singular fact that she made nothing of the dangers and trials of travel in an unknown land, weighed down and hampered by the burden of a helpless and hopeless invalid, unused to the climate, and possibly beyond the reach of the most ordinary advantages of civilized life. The thought had not occurred to her and she brushed aside the difficulty. But on the question of disobeying and even abandoning her uncle in his old age and with his terrible infirmity, he was peremptory, and sternly bade her to abandon the idea at once.

Almost in despair, she remembered the words of the wrecked and broken student and she timidly asked:

"What would our Lord do? What would He say?"

He said coldly:

"I don't know. I am only judging by my own weak lights and they are against your going away."

Then as a final refuge she asked:

"If I go, will it be a sin? Am I contravening the will of God?"

And he decided that it might be rash, imprudent, undutiful; but she was of an age to decide her own future and he could not say that it would be a sin.

Meanwhile a letter she had written to her little friend,

who was far away, hidden in the cold, rough cloisters of her convent, praying and suffering for a sinful world, had reached its destination and was the subject of anxious prayer to this devoted soul. And like other saintly spirits, she did not put her judgment to the rack, nor torture her weak faculties by balancing arguments. But she redoubled her austerities and sought light from the only source whence it is attainable by poor mortals, namely from that Supernal Wisdom that lends to feeble reason the supreme power of "right judgments and just works."

Then after a day or two, and having obtained permission from her superior, she sat down and indited a long letter to her friend, writing in a half conscious manner and leaving herself almost passive in the hands of Him who, she knew, would guide her aright. When she read the letter over, she was rather surprised to find that she had advised Annie to do what was heroic, rather than what was prudent, although she thought she had sat down with the intention of dissuading her from going abroad and deserting her uncle. But she wound up the letter with the one sentence that would exculpate her, if she had proved an unwise counsellor:

"But in this, dearest Annie, and in all other perplexing questions, there seems but one safe principle to follow; and that is to seek the Will of God, which you may always ascertain by asking what would our Lord do, or what would He wish me to do under such or such circumstances. As to the opinions of the world, they are not to be noticed when the Finger of God points out a certain course. There will be Pharisees to the end, and Vah! Vahs! and wagging of heads. But the victory remains with God and conscience!"

Here then were conflicting opinions; although the girl felt that there was a singular coincidence in the very words with which the Protestant lad appealed to her charity and the words that came from the cloistered Collettine. But she felt now driven on, on, by some

undefined impulse; and, although she had yet to face the worst part of her trial in explaining her intention to her uncle, her mind no longer wavered. She should go!

The two, nurse and patient, travelled together to their respective homes in the same railway carriage. His father's brougham was waiting for him and he drove Annie to her uncle's house. There, as they parted and shook hands, she said:

"I have consulted my friends, Jack, and I'm going with you. The sooner our preparations are made, the better for us both."

He put her hand to his lips and said:

"God bless you! Give me one bare week. This day-week we start together."

It was a sad week for the devoted girl, and yet her decision, now with her strong character unalterable, made the situation more tolerable. During the week her uncle did not relax the severity of his manner towards her. Cold and impassive and reserved, he received her redoubled attentions with a frigid politeness that was less tolerable than bursts of anger. And what she felt far more keenly, the infirmity of almost total blindness had reduced the old man to a condition of helplessness and weakness that was very touching. Watching him groping his way by feeling along the edges of tables or the bookcase; seeing him silently brooding over the fire these dread winter days without the solace of books or other companionship, save the visit of his curate to recite the Divine Office with him; and thinking of his utter loneliness and abandonment when she, whom he expected to be the prop of his declining years, had turned her back upon him forever; her heart smote her with compassion and remorse and her consciousness murmured:

"Yes, for an alien in race and religion, you are abandoning in his helplessness the man who took you into his house when you were a helpless orphan, and who has watched over you with fatherly interest all your life!"

Coming on to the close of the appointed week, these promptings became so urgent and oppressive that she seemed almost like a distracted being; and once or twice she had actually packed up her little belongings, determined to steal away from the house and save herself the agony and shame of parting. But her pride, or native strength of character, compelled her to abandon the idea as cowardly. She *should* speak and reveal her determination, no matter what it cost.

It was the last evening before the day fixed for departure and she knew she had to face the bitter ordeal before the night closed down. She had spoken to Father Liston in the afternoon when he had closed his daily visit and told him all. He had not reassured her.

"Probably, if I were in the place of your director," he said gravely, "I should have proffered the same advice, because a director has to consider the spiritual interests of the penitent at his feet and none other. But somehow, if you were to consult me on the general principle — whether it were greater or nobler to go abroad or to remain at home — well, I shouldn't hesitate there. But your uncle can take but one view of it — be prepared for that — and it is not altogether the selfish one. But you know what a stickler he is for law, for propriety, for the necessity of avoiding the least thing that may disedify the ignorant; and there he is relentless."

She only replied:

"May God help me. It is the hardest trial of my life."
And it was.

It was just after tea that she broached the subject to her uncle. The meal had been suffered by both to pass almost in silence, as if he had a foreboding that it might be the last. Then, gulping down her emotion and summoning all her strength, she said:

"I shall be leaving in the morning, Uncle, and I shall not probably see you to bid you good-bye!"

Something in her tone of voice struck him, for he raised himself up into an attitude of attention.

"You are going back to the hospital?" he said.

"No!" she replied. "I am going to South Africa."

He started with surprise and was silent for a moment. Then he said, as if anxious to reassure himself:

"You have got an appointment out there as nurse?"

"No!" she said. "Or rather, perhaps, I should say yes! I am accompanying Mr. Wycherly as nurse. He is ordered to South Africa, as the only chance of saving his life. We both leave in the morning to catch the Cape steamer in London."

He paused so long that she was beginning to hope that he had taken the matter indifferently, but she was soon undeceived.

"You see no impropriety in this?" he said.

"No, Uncle," she replied. "I thought you might object on that ground, so I thought it well to get the fullest assurance from our medical staff that it was strictly correct and professional."

"Your medical staff!" he said, with the old fierce scorn breaking through his apparent calm, "strictly 'correct' and 'professional'! And do you think that your medical staff can break through the commandments of God and every instinct of propriety, which you are about to outrage?"

The scornful tone which he assumed was lucky for her, because her own temper rose with it and she said:

"I am not aware that I am about to break any commandment of God; and I cannot see the least impropriety in my accompanying a dying boy any more than nursing him in his own house."

"I thought," he said with bitter sarcasm, "that I had already conveyed to you my sense of the grave impropriety — the gross impropriety of which you have been guilty in going to Rohira against my wishes, and exciting the comments of the entire parish."

"You should have forbidden me, Uncle, to study for the profession at first. You should have foreseen these things. It is not fair to allow me to follow a profession

and get qualified, and then step in with foolish scruples to thwart me."

"Foolish scruples?" he cried, turning around until his eyes seemed to burn her through the black spectacles. "And do you mean to tell me that I weigh for one moment the life of that boy, which, as you say, is already doomed, with the scandal you will give to every member of my flock? How can I face the people again? How can I stand at God's altar, where I have denounced vice and every occasion of vice until I had rooted out every possibility of sin in my parish? Will not the people have a perfect right to turn round and say: 'Physician, heal thyself! You, who have never spared the feelings of others, when sin was in question, now let us hear what you have to say of your niece? She has eloped, run away with that Protestant gentleman —'"

"Uncle! Uncle!" cried the girl, her face crimson with indignation and shame, "for shame! I never thought I should hear such cruel, unjust, and uncharitable things from your mouth. You know perfectly well it is not an elopement — that there's not a single feature of anything so base in it — that I am acting through a pure sense of Christian charity and my duty as a hospital-nurse. Nor do I believe that there is even one in the entire parish that would look at it as you — as you —"

And here her womanly pride broke down and she sobbed piteously.

He was not a man to be touched by such a scene; and, even if he were, he felt so keenly that so great a principle and law was at stake that he would be equally relentless.

"You are gravely mistaken," he said in a serious tone not meant to be severe. "There is not one in this parish that will either understand or condone what you purpose doing. The guilt or innocence of the matter concerns yourself. The scandal to my parishioners concerns me. But there is no use in wasting words on such a subject. You have made your decision. And this is mine."

He paused for a moment and began tapping the table,

as if to measure his words by that mechanical action. Then he continued:

"You leave this house on a mission that has neither my sanction nor consent. You cannot return here ever again. The choice is not mine. It is your own. I cannot even seem to condone what I regard as a grave scandal. Furthermore, I do not wish to hear from you ever again —"

"Uncle!" pleaded the sobbing girl, but she could go no further.

He rose up and groped his way to the bookcase and, taking out a bunch of keys, he opened a bureau and took out a cash-box, which he placed on the table and opened. He groped and extracted a bundle of notes, which he counted and placed on the table, laying his hand on them.

"I had kept these few pounds in reserve for you, that you might not be penniless at my death. But as this is death, for henceforth you are dead to me —"

"Uncle, uncle, stop, stop, or you'll kill me," said the poor girl, flinging herself on her knees before him. "Oh, you're a cruel, cruel man! You have no heart, no feeling for anyone. Oh, for God's sake, take back your money and give me — give me your blessing!"

She leaned her arms on the table and her head on her hands, and the tears rained hotly through her fingers. Then Nature woke within him and, although he was inexorable, he felt deeply touched.

"Sit down," he said, "and listen to me!"

She rose from her kneeling position and sat down, though she well knew it was only the prolongation of her agony.

He again tapped the table gently with his hands and said rather gently:

"Five or six years ago, it matters not which, I received a letter from a priest in Chicago to the effect that my sister had just died and left an orphan girl to my charge. I had not parted from that sister in a very friendly way and had not heard from her for years. And I was a lonely,

solitary man, accustomed to quietness and solitude and finding society of any kind irksome. I wrote promptly to that priest to the effect that under no circumstances could I receive the orphan girl into my house; that it was against our statutes to do so; but that out of my limited means I would provide amply for her education in America. I posted that letter without a misgiving, but to make my conscience more at rest I consulted an old woman, a saint in the parish, as to what I had done. She was one of those rare characters who see things from eternity, and she answered at once that I had done rightly, adding that a priest's relatives were the flock that God committed to his care, and that any solicitude withdrawn from them and given to his relations in the flesh was so much taken from God, for which God would exact a corresponding retribution. I was quite at ease, therefore, in my mind until that Christmas eve, when you, Annie, unexpectedly arrived. I don't know if I betrayed my feelings, but you were decidedly unwelcome — ”

“ You couldn't have been kinder, Uncle,” said Annie in her tears.

“ Then I must have prevaricated, for I foresaw that my peace of mind, along with my beloved solitude, was banished forever. But,” he continued after a pause, “ that was but a momentary feeling. Soon, very soon, I saw in you, Annie, only a ray of sunlight shot by a merciful Providence athwart the gloom of my declining years. I saw in your disposition, your talents, your firmness of character the very ideal of all that an old, forsaken man could dream of as a prop and support for my old age; and I said to myself that my remaining years would be brightened and blessed by your presence, and that my growing infirmity, which I knew could only end in total blindness, would at least be alleviated by such help as a bright, intelligent girl alone could give.”

He paused again and every word was rankling, like an arrow, in the soul of the girl.

“ But now I know that all that was sin and that it

should bear its retribution. I broke the law, and the law has its inevitable revenge. Instead of leaning on God in my old age and under the burden of many sorrows, I sought strength and support in a creature. And, as is usual in all such cases, I have leaned on a broken reed. I am abandoned and deceived."

"Uncle, Uncle!" said the poor girl, "these are hard sayings. How have I deceived you? You made no objection to my adopting a profession. You should not object now to my following it. Besides, it is only a few weeks — at most a few months. Mr. Wycherly cannot live long and I shall be at liberty in any case to return home when I see him firmly and safely established in Africa —"

"If you mean by returning home, that you shall be at liberty to come under my roof again, I say most emphatically, *Never!*"

And he brought down his clenched hand heavily on the table.

"I," he continued fiercely, "I, who have ostracized and banished from this parish for twenty-five years everyone that offended against public decency, I say that you shall *never* darken my door again, or give occasion to the impious to blaspheme God."

She rose up and went to the door. His voice arrested her.

"Mind," he said, "there is no passion or resentment in what I have said. But Law is Law and I, its representative. Let us not part in anger, Annie! Come hither!"

She approached the table again and he pushed the pile of notes toward her.

"Take these," he said. "They are no use to me and they were intended for you. You will need them."

"I am in no need of money," she replied. "But I dread a long voyage without your forgiveness. Uncle, can't you relent and forgive? Surely our Lord would not approve —?"

She hesitated, but he caught at the word.

"No! He would never approve of your conduct and your action. Go and leave me alone!"

She went weeping to her room, where she passed a sleepless and sorrowful night. And it was only the loud chiming of the clock at midnight on his mantelpiece in the dining-room that woke up the old man from his reverie. He turned down the lamp, lighted his candle, and groped his way upwards to his bedroom. He never closed his eyes in sleep until the gray dawn was breaking and, therefore, he could not have heard a light footfall stopping outside his door in the early morning, or the sound of sobbing, as the girl knelt and put her lips to the panels of the door.

Outside in the cold, icy atmosphere of a January morning the brougham was waiting and the coachman had already hoisted her luggage on the top. Jack Wycherly, looking wan and pinched and miserable, even though he was wrapped to the eyes in furs, put out one bony hand and clasped the soft fingers of his nurse, as he drew her into the carriage. She turned away her face after the first greeting, but he saw that she had been weeping.

"Annie," he said. "I know what a sacrifice you are making. But God will reward you."

In an hour they were in the train, speeding fast toward the South.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE GREAT ARTIST AGAIN

THE marriage of Kerins to Martha Sullivan was celebrated with much pomp and expense. The whole Clan-Sullivan and their gossips and neighbours were gathered together, not only for the ceremony and the fun and feasting, but also as a demonstration of strength and as a warning to all whom it might concern that henceforth and forever Kerins had allied himself with first-rate powers in the parish, and that an offensive and defensive alliance was now solemnly made, which would be opposed only at the peril of the offenders.

Kerins had brought home his bride after the festivities, and, having furnished his house at some expense, he was anxious to reciprocate the hospitality of his wife's friends and also to show them that it was not to a cold and inhospitable hearth he had brought her.

It was on the twenty-ninth of January, the evening after Annie O'Farrell and her patient had left for South Africa, that the "house-warming" took place. And it was so complete and the hospitality was so profuse, that it was regarded as a second wedding. Spring-chickens were not to be had, but a few fat turkeys, left over after the Christmas holocaust, were ruthlessly sacrificed, and there was salt meat enough boiled for the whole parish. Vast currant-cakes were ordered up, too, from the neighbouring town; there were several dozens of bottled porter and, as a *pièce de resistance*, a keg or cask, containing ten gallons of good Cork whiskey. It was none of your well-watered, washy, pale, and limpid whiskeys either, but rich, brown, sherry-looking liquor that gripped your

throat and warmed you, inside and outside, and made you at peace, at least for a while, with all mankind. The big barn was cleared for dancing and there were two fiddlers up from the town, although the boys and girls had brought concertinas and accordions enough to make an oratorio.

Before the short, wintry day had closed in some of the Sullivans had again "walked" the farm, although they had been careful to do so before the match was made. But, when men make a good bargain, they like to reassure themselves that all is right. And so they passed from field to field, measuring the fecundity of each and speculating on the cattle and the sheep that were yearning with their young. When the night fell the fun commenced, and the central power whence all the pleasure radiated was the bright young girl, who had assumed the duties and responsibilities of the household. She was one of those bright, cheery, handsome young girls, who, self-forgetful and unspoiled, seemed created to make everyone happy around her; and this night, when she appeared for the first time as queen and mistress of the place, she threw all her energies into the task of making it a memorable occasion by reason of the splendid hospitality that was being dispensed. There were good wishes *galore*, too, shed around her, although there were also little hints and suggestions that it was a shame to throw away such a fine young creature on such an old and outworn husband as Kerins. Of course, this, too, was an exaggeration, for Kerins was not old, only in the prime of life, and he was by no means outworn, because he was knit together in nerve and muscle, a hard-grained, coarse, but by no means vulgar man. He followed his young wife with eyes of admiration during all the many events of that long night; and he thought from what an abyss of misery he had been saved by the intervention of the young priest, who had taken him in hand and drawn him back from drink and destitution to which he had been rushing headlong.

Father Liston for many reasons was invited and came to the entertainment. He was pleased to have been instrumental in placing this poor fellow on his feet and in bringing together certain elements in the parish, which might have been mutually hostile. For now, owing to the blindness of the pastor and his advancing age, Henry Liston found the entire burden of the administration of the parish devolving on his shoulders and he braced himself to the task by prayer and work, that seemed to be without intermission.

At the supper, which was held about nine o'clock, although there had been various refreshments dispensed throughout the evening, he thought it his duty to make a little speech, in which he foretold all kinds of happiness for the newly-wedded pair, and long years of such buoyant health and increasing prosperity as might excite the emulation, but not the envy of their neighbours.

He was going on gaily, quite pleased with his own eloquence, when his eye caught suddenly the sight of the great artist and actor, Delane, who was slowly wiping the froth of bottled porter from his moustache and calmly gazing around the table with his old look of superiority and superciliousness. The young priest, wondering what brought the fellow there and still under the spell of his assumed superiority, lost the thread of his speech, and, after stammering and faltering a little, he sat down. There were thunders of applause, of course, and a second speech, and a third, which, if not very grammatical and consecutive, were at least pretty warm and cordial. A few songs, sentimental and patriotic, closed the ceremony of supper, and the company at once adjourned to the barn.

Henry Liston was watching the opportunity of speaking to the "melancholy Dane" and it came soon, because, whilst the others seemed anxious for such frivolities as dancing, Delane clung to the more substantial pleasure of drinking. It was clear that so long as the bottled porter lasted, so long would he cling to his place at the

table. He had one or two boon companions with him, to whom he could dispense the riches of his great intellect, and he was happy. For there is no happier man than such as he, who, surrounded by a circle of admirers, is permitted to drink without interruption and talk without contradiction.

When Henry approached, the admiring audience melted away, much to Delane's chagrin, and it was with some little pique he said, in answer to Henry's abrupt interrogation, "What brought you here, Delane? You're the last man I expected to see at such a rural feast":

"I am here, sir, in the pursuit of my profession."

The little word "rural," however, seemed by some subtle flattery to suggest that he was quite above such things, but was there as a matter of condescension, for he added:

"My work was really completed, but, by request, I remained."

"But surely," said Henry in all sincerity, "you had no work to do here? I can hardly imagine *you* engaged in a farmer's house."

"Ah, there again," said Delane. "You appear, sir, to have some unhappy talent for touching me where I am most sensitive."

Henry protested his utter and entire innocence of any desire to give the great man offence. But the great man only shook his head mournfully.

"It is a fatal gift that some people have," he said, "of always treading on the most sensitive nerve in the constitution of others, but where is the use of complaining? Where?"

He was so melancholy that Henry would have discontinued the conversation and gone away, but he knew that the artist would develop.

"You have expressed some surprise, sir," said he, after a deep draught of porter, "at my appearing in my capacity as artist amid such humble surroundings, but you must remember that even greater than I painted frescoes

on the walls of monastic cells and on the panels of sacristies. True, I have been sent here, commissioned by the young lady, to whom you have referred this evening in such eloquent, but perhaps more or less injudicious terms, to decorate what she is pleased to call her drawing-room — ”

He stopped, bent his head on his hands, and moaned:

“Good God! To think that I, the student of Raffaele and Titian, should have to daub in red and ochre the cupboards of a farmer’s house! Can anyone say after this that the age in which we live is not an age of utter degradation and abasement?”

It appeared so sad to the young priest that he offered his respectful sympathies and condolences, but asked for further explanations. He was at a loss to know how such an artist could be employed in such vulgar work.

“You see,” said Delane, “that in former days some persons of position may have occupied this place; and they had some taste beyond their times, because they had the panels of their doors decorated by what they considered landscape paintings. The daubs are absolutely unearthly — no perspective, no proportion — a swallow, not bigger than a honey-bee, is in the foreground and a sea-gull as big as a gander is in the far offing of the sea. There are green rocks, red rocks, yellow rocks; blue waves, red waves, yellow waves; a boat is heeling over in a position that no boat ever yet assumed without losing its centre of gravity. But I weary you. Suffice it to say that this young woman, ambitious I suppose, wants all this done over again and — *in the same style*. Imagine my feelings when I am compelled for base lucre to paint a sky like a kitchen and a sunset like a circus-wagon. I who might have been Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorraine in one, if the Fates had allowed!”

He stooped his head in an attitude of melancholy, but immediately added:

“I beg pardon. I am always betraying myself. Of course, you have never heard of Rosa and Lorraine.”

“A little,” said Henry Liston. “But you said my remarks a few minutes ago were injudicious. How?”

“Good heavens, sir,” said the artist, “is it possible you didn’t perceive that you made every girl in the room green with envy, and every man henceforth a sworn enemy of this peasant, Kerins? If you didn’t perceive it, the young lady herself did. I never saw such care and melancholy written on the human countenance before. It was Mrs. Siddons posing for Tragedy, but of course, you never heard of Siddons?”

“A little,” said the young priest, moving away in a thoughtful mood, to the intense relief of the great artist, who instantly gathered around him again his more obsequious audience, to whom he said with an accent of infinite pity and contempt:

“You noticed that little passage of arms? It was a complete rout. He threw down his arms and fled. A most unsophisticated young gentleman! There is no greater greenhorn than a young clerical person, unless it be one of these peasant people. But then sometimes they develop into a truculent old savage like this young person’s parish priest — a real, downright, undiluted Bashi-Bazouk, who knows no more about Art than a cow about a holiday, and who probably thinks that Michael Angelo was a country fiddler.”

“I wish he heard you,” said one of the audience, but *sotto voce* so as not to offend the great man.

“Heard me?” said the latter. “Yes, he did and saw me. And he is not likely to forget it. I heard he took to his bed very soon after my interview with him and that he has lost his eyesight.”

“So he has! That’s true!” was the confirmation of several.

“I’m sorry,” said the artist loftily. “But when you provoke genius, you must take the consequences. If you stare at the sun, what’s the result?”

“Why, you run blind, of course,” was the reply.

“Precisely,” said the artist.

It was quite true, however, what the rascal had said about the young bride and mistress of the revels that night. Instead of being exalted by the praises of the young priest, she seemed to have been drawn by his remarks into a pensive mood that sat perhaps on her features even more pleasantly than smiles or laughter, but yet was an indication that beneath the riotousness and hilarity of the evening she saw some reasons for sadness—regret for the past, or apprehensions for the future? It was both. Some words the young priest had dropped inadvertently seemed to waken up echoes from a not distant past, when she was all but affianced to another. And, though Dick Duggan was not an Adonis, yet he was twenty years younger than her husband, and he was a bluff, blundering, truculent fellow, but yet possessed of that fierce animal courage that will always appeal to the imagination of the young. Not that she regretted what she had done, but these rays of darkness will shoot out from the past and trouble the felicities of the present. She had not met Dick Duggan, nor any of the family, since her marriage. She rather shunned them. But yet this night, when, surrounded by friends and honoured as the queen of these festivities, she felt she had reached the summit of human happiness, a little remorse for her former lover would creep in, and with it, a half-stifled yearning to see him and make a reparation of words to him. The desire seemed to grow stronger in the heart of the girl as the night waxed and the fun grew more furious; and at length, going into the kitchen for some domestic purpose, she chanced to see Cora, the gypsy girl, in a corner, mute, silent, in her favourite attitude of listening—knees bent up and elbows resting on them and her head resting on her hands, and after a while, she beckoned to the girl and went out.

In gloomy contrast with the light and the fun and the festivities in Crossfields, the cottage where the Duggans resided was sunk in darkness and sullen misery that

night. The family were grouped around the fire, so despondent and enraged that not a word broke the silence. The men smoked and looked at the fire. The women bent forward in melancholy meditation. The sounds of the fiddles, sometimes the echo of a song, and sometimes the pattering of feet crept now and again to their ears to redouble their despondency.

Late that night and just as they were thinking of retiring, the latch of the door was suddenly and unceremoniously lifted, and Cora, the gypsy girl, without a word of apology, came in, and uninvited took a seat near the fire. For a few moments not a word of greeting or inquiry was uttered; and then the old man, taking the pipe from his mouth and pointing over his shoulder, said:

"You have been over there?"

"Yes!" she said, carelessly looking round and studying the faces that seemed so weird and haggard in the red light of the peat-fire, "There's a goodly gatherin' over there!"

"And plenty of fun?"

"Yes. Hark! That is the dancing in the barn. It is a gay scene."

"I guess their *ceol* will be changed into *keening* before long," said Dick Duggan savagely.

The girl tried to catch his eye and beckon to him, but failed. He was too preoccupied with his savage thoughts.

"I hope Mr. Wycherly will survive the voyage!" said the gypsy girl meaningly.

"What voyage? Is he gone?" was the query all round.

"Yes. He departed for the Cape yesterday morning, but he didn't go alone."

"Of course, not," said the old woman. "The poor boy couldn't never bear the journey; and I believe 'tis as far away as America."

"No!" said the girl, looking at the fire and apparently speaking to herself. "He took a companion — a wife, I should say. The parish priest's niece eloped with him."

The whole family sprang to their feet. Crossfields was forgotten. With savage glee, Dick Duggan said:

"Divil a betther! I wondher will we hear anything from the althar now? Divil a betther thing happened for many a long day."

"She couldn't have betther luck," said his sister, who shared the brother's hatred toward the girl.

"Is it gone abroad a-yet?" said Dick eagerly.

"Well, 'tis known down along the valley," said Cora. "It's in the mouths of all the people."

"'Tis a lie for you, you young hussy," said the old woman in a furious temper. "Get out of me house, ye young haythen, an' never darken the door agen. 'Tis a black day, whin the likes of you can blacken the charackther of ivery dacent person in the parish."

The gesture that accompanied the words was unmistakable. The girl coolly rose and, as she passed Dick, she gently plucked his coat and vanished in the darkness. He understood and followed.

"You're stupid," she said. "I beckoned to you and you wouldn't see. You're wantin' over there!"

"Over where?" he said, mystified and incredulous.

"Over there!" she said, pointing to Crossfields. "Go down by the ploughed field and into the screen near the house and wait."

"But who wants me and for what?" he asked.

"The young missus. She will speak to you herself," said the girl; and so silently she vanished that it was some time before he knew he was alone.

CHAPTER XL

THE BROTHERS MEET

HIGH up on the mountain slopes of Kaffraria, within view of the great mountain range of the Drakensberg, and in a little village where a few whites resided and a great many Kaffirs, Jack Wycherly and his nurse had taken up their residence. He had picked up great strength on his sea-voyage and all the terrible depression that was consequent on his illness seemed to have left him, when the good ship "The Dunrobin Castle," after surmounting the huge seas and the fierce tempests of the Bay of Biscay, glided into more tranquil ocean-spaces, and the breezes from the south, laden to the eager imagination of the invalid with healing warmth and the odour of tropical spices, stole over the sunny waters and lingered from dawn to dark. After the first week, he spent all his time, day and night, on deck, sometimes walking up and down the long narrow passages, more often reclining in his hammock, that was swung under the eaves of the upper deck and thus sheltered from sun and rain. He was the object of respectful sympathy during the three weeks' voyage to the Cape; and his nurse, sometimes taken for his sister, sometimes for his wife, received the most unvarying courtesy from captain, crew, and passengers. This became even more pronounced, when a little halo of romance was thrown around her, and it became known that she had sacrificed a good deal through a spirit of devotion toward the stricken and dying boy.

They had been advised by experienced persons to go as far up the country and as far inland as possible; and

hence, instead of remaining at Capetown, they went on to a further port, East London, whence they plunged at once into the wilderness of veldt and brush and kloof. Their destination now was Aliwal North, a station on the very borders of the Orange River Colony, where the rainfall was comparatively little, and the temperature even, and the air dry and bracing. But the sudden strength acquired during the sea-voyage seemed to have ebbed away in the heat and moisture of the coast; and they closed their journey by breaking off at Amabele Junction and making for the little village of Butterworth.

Here, in a kind of shanty, half-hotel, half-store, and combining post-office, newspaper depôt, saloon, etc., they found themselves at first located. But the ebbing strength of the boy made him irritable and impatient of noises, and nervously susceptible to such inconveniences as will arise from a mixed and not highly-civilized community. And, after a few weeks, he changed to an improvised sanatorium, hastily constructed by the willing hands of the natives. It was made of shingle, roofed with corrugated iron, that seems to be the most attainable and useful commodity in South Africa, but it was so placed that the thick foliage of the trees sheltered the roof from the burning sun and from the tropical rains when they came. Annie remained at the hotel, visiting her patient several times a day and ministering to his ever-increasing wants. Here she was brought into contact with the most diverse specimens of humanity — Bushmen, Hottentots, Griguas, Zulus, Basutos, Boers, and tribesmen, English speculators, and Dutch veldtsmen, Cambridge M.A.'s and Hooligans from the East End of London. But somehow the savageries of civilization seemed to have toned down into a broader spirit of humanity, as there was more equality of condition and community of interests. And over this motley commonwealth, Annie O'Farrell assumed in an incredibly short space of time a kind of queenship, undesired, but in its own way delightful to the lonely girl.

For now, at night, when the heavy odours of the masses of arum lilies, that grew in thick profusion down in the deep valleys by the wady, where the kraals of the natives were pitched, came up on the night-wind and filled her little chamber, and the scream of the jackal and the harsh cries of the prowling Cape tiger awoke the echoes along the silent, moonlit street, the thoughts of the young girl would wander back to the lonely old man, sitting sightless by his fireside, alone with his own thoughts, and these thoughts, she surmised, were bitter. What had happened? Was there grave scandal given to these primitive people; or had they intelligence enough to understand the mission of mercy on which she had staked home and happiness, life, and even reputation? What was said of her at the hospital? Quite true, there was nothing in the least irregular in what she had done. Every day young nurses went forth to carry their knowledge and skill to bedsides, where the old and young, the rich and poor, had to submit to the inexorable law of suffering. But still there was something peculiar in her case; and how would it be interpreted? And the long wail of the jaguar would echo from the veldt as the only answer; and the brilliant southern moon would throw its gold across the white counterpane of her bed; and she would drop to sleep to find broken answers to her questions in strange and inharmonious dreams.

During the day such thoughts troubled her but little. Three or four times before dinner she would have to visit her patient and take to him from the kitchen of the saloon such little delicacies as she could procure. Then she had to tidy up his cabin, arrange his hammock, read for him, chat with him. And when she was not engaged there very often she was summoned to the bedside of some poor miner, who was stricken down with disease and drink; and by her soothing and simple ways she tried to exorcise the devils that a poisoned or diseased imagination had called up. But more often she found herself down amongst the native kraals,

where the magnificent physique with which Nature had largely endowed her children had been ruined or impaired even by such slender contact with civilization. Yea, the very vices and diseases of modern life had crept into the very sanctuary of the great Mother; and it was no unusual sight for Annie to see some black Hercules struggling in the throes of *delirium tremens*, or some Venus in ebony gasping under the suffocation of pneumonia or diphtheria, names and things unknown among the native hills.

But her tender and affectionate solicitude, dictated by a kind heart and Christian charity, struck home to the hearts of these poor creatures; and in a short time she was to them their "white queen," enthroned and crowned by their gratitude.

One day when she was reading under the thick shade of the palms that sheltered the little bungalow or tent where Jack Wycherly was gasping out the feeble remnants of his life, he stopped her suddenly and said:

"Annie, turn down the leaf there and let us talk."

"You mustn't talk too much, Jack," she said. "It is distressing and—" she stopped a moment, fearing to alarm him—"you know we cannot get ice or ergo-tine here."

He understood what she meant, but he went on.

"I have lost all fear now. The sight of these poor savages and the still more savage whites that are here has reconciled me to death. I want to get away from all this horrible animalism. I can't make out why I clung so fiercely to such a wretched life."

"Everyone clings to life. It is quite natural," she said simply.

"Yes, but why? This is what tortures me. I had no idea we were so near the brutes until I came here and saw nature in all its nakedness. It is horrible. I'm dying to die—to get away from all the horror of living."

"That is morbid, Jack," she said. "And besides, life

is but the outer porch of eternity. You believe in the soul and in God, Jack, don't you?"

It was the first time she had spoken to him of religion and she did so with all that strange reluctance and half-shame that Catholics feel on such occasions.

"I didn't believe in Him till I knew you, Annie," he replied. "I believe in Him now."

The words struck her silent, but he went on:

"You mustn't mind what a poor devil with one foot in the grave is saying, Annie. But you have brought back to me all that I had ever learned in my childhood about religion and all that I had forgotten in science. It is hard to help thinking when you are probing, and cutting, and tearing open the human mechanism that it is all but a piece of chemistry, animated, of course, but still a chemical compound and no more. But when one sees you and such as you, the question will arise, Whence came all this goodness and truth, and mercy and love? Phosphorus and lime and iron don't possess these things. There is some other principle containing them all, and in perfection; and that is God. There, Annie, see what a controversialist you are without ever opening your lips on religion to me."

"I think, Jack," she said after a pause, "it would be well if you allowed me to read something for you and to pray for you, as there is no minister of your religion here."

"The very thing I was going to ask," he said. "But I was shy. And I think I must make my will also. The sands are running out fast."

And so that afternoon and several times a day from that day forward she read for him chapter after chapter of the *New Testament* and the *Imitation of Christ* alternately; and a great change seemed to come over him, so gentle and so resigned, so patient and forbearing he became.

It was about a week after this conversation that, waking up one afternoon in his hammock and finding Annie ever watchful near him, he said abruptly:

"I wonder who is this *Ba-as!* as the natives call him, about whom they are always speaking."

"I cannot say," said Annie, who was more solicitous about her patient than eager to hear the gossip of the place. "Some rancher, I suppose, or miner up amongst the hills."

"Because," said Jack, following his own thoughts, "there is a time in sleep just when the brain is waking up to consciousness, do you know, and you see things by second-sight. Now that happened to me a few nights ago. By the way, did any letters come from home yet, Annie?" he asked suddenly.

"No!" she said. "You know I wrote father all along the route and I expect he will write. We are not here very long as yet, you know."

"True," he said musingly. "And Pap was a poor correspondent at best. But he knows now where we are and he must write, if only to acknowledge your letter."

"But as I was saying," he resumed after a pause, "you know Mackenzie was down here a few nights ago and we had a few pitched battles about Moore and Burns and all that patriotic rot that fools will talk about to the end of time. Then he got on religion, just because he hadn't any. These fellows are always dragging up religion. They are like fellows that have committed some secret crime and they must be hinting at it. He was talking about his atheism and all that, and science and all that. And I was tired, and I could only point up and say, in the old way: 'Messieurs, who made all that?' You know the way the skies look down here, Annie; and just then some of the stars looked so ripe and rich that I thought they would drop down on us. Well, he didn't like it, and said something about cosmic forces and all that. And then he said: 'There's a chap up along here, a rich fellow with a small army of natives, and he's always talking that way to them, and telling them to be decent and clean and sober, because there

are eyes watching them out of eternity. Well, that's not the queer thing. But, as I was saying, when the dawn was breaking behind here and just as I woke up, or rather just before I woke up to consciousness, I thought a man stood by here, dressed in the manner of the Boers or ranchers and with a great long whip in his hand. And he looked at me earnestly and said nothing. And then the thought would occur; and I said to myself, first, That's the *Ba-as*, the natives are speaking about. And just as I thought this, the figure turned and it was *Dion!*"

Annie looked at him curiously and he noticed her incredulity.

"Never fear," he said, "it is not tuberculous delirium, although I suppose that will come. It was only a dream, yet more than a dream, because I was conscious, at least I think so, and I saw the face and features of Dion."

"Dion must be dead," said Annie, unwilling to encourage the delusion. "At least, everyone thinks so. You know he hasn't written for years."

"Well, we'll let it pass," he said. "But it is strange — that vivid action of the brain just as it is waking up. I wonder shall I get a glimpse into the future just as I am nearing death?"

"It may be," she said simply. "But let us not anticipate all that."

"Why? How much you are afraid, Annie," he said. "Now, I'm not a bit afraid, only eager to cast off this old and worn-out and patched-up gabardine of a body. Oh, I must make that will to-morrow; and I'm to be buried, not down in that dismal hollow, where the Bushmen are, but on the highest spot of this hill — just where the first rays of the sun will strike in the morning and his last rays linger at sunset. You'll promise that, won't you?"

But the girl was weeping for the sorrow and loneliness of the thing, and could not answer.

"Why, you're crying, Annie!" said the boy. "Now, you shouldn't cry. Don't, dear! You shouldn't cry,

for you'll see Ireland and old Rohira again. But I — never! What matter! Annie!"

"Well, Jack!"

"Just say a little prayer for me and I'll listen. What a strength there is in prayer!"

And she prayed there for the dying boy, who was visibly fading away — prayed there on the lonely veldt, whilst the hot sun tried to peer through the thick lattice of the trees, and gay birds chattered overhead, and the sound of an oath came down from the saloon, or the shrill cries of Basuto women came up from the deep valley beneath.

"It is good and holy and refreshing," he said, leaning back in his hammock. "I made a little prayer myself last night, when I was watching the stars and saw the Hand of God swinging them in their orbits. Shall I say it?"

"Certainly," she said.

And with a faint blush mantling his cheeks, he said:

Spirit of Light, from Whose dark depths I came,
Spirit of Darkness, Who hath ever shone
Around me; Whose Unutterable Name
I seldom stammered in the life that's gone
Back to its fountain — Thee, The Eternal Sea,
Whose waters are not bitter, but most sweet.
Lo! In the depths I've fought and conquered Thee,
And victor lay me prostrate at Thy Feet.

Guide me, O Light! along the weary path
That lies still darker than the way I've trod;
Wash me, O Fountain, in Thy silvery bath,
Make white my vesture, ere I see my God.
Thou, the All-Pure, make clean my spotted soul!
Thou, the All-Rich, enrich my poverty!
Cast round my neck the white and spotless stole,
Thy clasp of Love — Thy seal of purity.

I see Thee swinging those vast orbs of Light.
I watch Thee pour into the lily's vase

Odours distilled beneath the noon of night,
Plucked with the dew from out the myriad maze
Of flowered fancies, each so subtly wrought
It needed all Thy Godhead's Science and Sense
To fashion in the forms which Thou hast brought
Within the orb of Thine Omnipotence.

Take my frail life, frail as the moth that wings
Its rapid flight in one melodious breath,
And fashion it anew with all those things
Cast in the brazen crucible of Death.
Lo! as my pulses flag, my senses die,
I feel Thee coming near, and ever near.
I hear Thee in my last unuttered sigh:
My spirit lingers; but my God is here!

"Do you like it, Annie?" he said, when he had concluded.

"Very much. It is very solemn and sweet," she said.

"It is prayer, at least," he said, "if it isn't poetry. I used to read and scribble poetry long ago at the Queen's. But *it wasn't like that.*"

The next morning a letter arrived from Rohira. It was a brief letter, such as the doctor always wrote. It contained some Bills of Exchange, so that money should never be wanting, and one item of news, namely, that a large party, a kind of house-warming, had been given at Kerins's; and that some day during the following week, Kerins had been found murdered. Duggan had been arrested for the crime and committed for trial to the Assizes, the evidence against him being overwhelming.

After Annie had read the letter twice, the boy answered:

"How little that fact interests us. I suppose it is a matter of moment there, far away under the dripping skies of Ireland. But it does not interest us any more. Annie?"

"Well?" she said.

"I saw Dion again last night. He stood over me and looked keenly and inquiringly at me. Has any stranger been up around the town?"

"There are so many strangers coming and going every day," she said, "that one would hardly be noticed. But surely this is some delusion, Jack. Did you question the men, who were on watch?"

"I cannot get a word out of them," he said. "When I speak to them on any ordinary subject, they talk the usual pigeon-English. But when I ask them about this, they talk a lot of gibberish. If they have seen anyone, they won't tell."

"They'll tell me," she said. "But I still think it is a delusion, Jack, which you ought dismiss. What shall I say to father?"

"Write as you deem wisest," he said. "But leave me a space at the end."

Annie was somewhat disappointed and annoyed, when on interrogating the natives she could only elicit the same undistinguishable sounds in their own language which had so annoyed Jack Wycherly. She thought she had a firmer hold over their affections and she believed all their eloquent protestations of fidelity and affection. But she could get no information on that subject. And, stranger still, when she questioned the people around the hotel, they had as little information to give. Strangers of all kinds rode in and out of the township — rough, strong men, great feeders and drinkers, and fierce fighters, if occasion offered. They sat and ate, drank and sang, harnessed their horses, paid their bills, and departed. They came and went, like the sand-storms that blew down from the hills and filled the liquor-measures with fine grit and dust.

She tried to dismiss the idea and set it down as a delusion of the sick boy's, as she tried to persuade him. But somehow, his insistence on the matter staggered her belief and she began to think that stranger things have happened. But then the thought would occur, Why was he so mysterious in his movements? If it were Dion, why not reveal himself at once and come to his brother's

assistance? For it was clear that if Dion were the *Ba-as*, about whom the natives were always speaking and whom they evidently regarded with a species of adoration, he could do a great deal for his brother in this strange and mysterious country.

She had written the reply to Dr. Wycherly's letter, leaving a blank space in the end for Jack's few words. These he filled in and closed up the envelope and handed it back to Annie to post.

Next night, just as she thought the dawn was breaking over the sleepy town, Annie arose and dressed herself hastily and went out. She had been mistaken. It was the strong moonlight, vivid as a summer dawn, that deceived her. The great round globe was slowly falling behind the hills, but its yellow radiance lit up the whole landscape, throwing its golden rays across every hillock and palm-tree and casting the shadows into deeper blackness.

Swiftly and silently she passed down the moonlit street, undisturbed and unchallenged, except when some restless dog barked behind some thick enclosure, and moved rapidly downward to the sheltered nook, where the consumptive boy was sleeping with easy breathing of the dry and aromatic air. When she came near she heard a low, warning cry, which she recognized as that of the two Griguas or Bushmen, who took their turn in watching the sick boy during the night; and, to her surprise, she saw the two men, standing like ebony statues in the moonlight, each with his assegai resting on the ground at his feet.

"Missy mus' not go! *Ba-as* in there!" said one, pointing to the bungalow.

Annie stood still and waited. Not a sound came from the interior — no sound of word or human language but now again a sharp cough from the patient which seemed to be answered by the bark of the jackal from the neighbouring mountain.

A quarter of an hour — a half-hour seemed to pass. The gray dawn crept up behind the mountain and threw a pale twilight across the valley.

Then there was a slight rustle and the two Kaffirs straightened themselves; and a tall figure, bronzed and bearded and clothed in rough, hunting costume came out of the hut. Annie stepped forward boldly and confronted him. She did not recognize him and he had forgotten her. But the dream of the dying boy came back to her and she said boldly:

“Dion Wycherly?”

“Yes!” he said abruptly. “Tell me, whoever you are, and in God’s name, who is that?”

“Your brother, Jack!” she said.

“Dying?”

“Yes, I fear so!”

He passed his rough hand athwart his forehead, where the beads of perspiration were gathering, and simply said:

“My God!”

Then, recollecting himself, he addressed Annie:

“And you? Forgive me. I should know you, but I cannot remember.”

“I’m Annie O’Farrell,” she said. “Your old teacher.”

He grasped her hand in his strong palm. Then, as if a sudden thought struck him, he said eagerly:

“His wife?”

“No!” she said, and he thought in an accent of disappointment, “His nurse!”

CHAPTER XLI

A QUESTION AND ITS ANSWER

DOUBTING, wondering, puzzled, pushing forward in the darkness toward Crossfields, then suddenly retracing his steps, angry yet pleased, vindictive but forgiving, Dick Duggan made his way at last to the little "screen" or shrubbery at the rear of the Kerins house. The night was pitch dark, but the whole yard between the screen and the house was illuminated with a flood of light from the open door of the kitchen, where lamps were burning and a mighty fire was blazing, and all the hurry and bustle of a great entertainment showed that this was the centre of the evening's hospitality. Across the glow of light that shone through the door, dark figures came and went, as the servants rushed into the yard for firewood, or turf, or flung out dirty water, or useless remnants of vegetables. But there was always a jest and a laugh, a tiny echo of the hilarious merriment that proceeded within doors.

For some time Dick Duggan waited and watched, growing ever more angry and impatient, as he contrasted his own loneliness and the dark and gloomy cabin he had left with all this brightness and tumultuous rejoicing. Once or twice the thought occurred that the gypsy girl had made a fool of him and was now probably laughing at him as a victim of a cruel joke. But he argued that this was impossible and that the girl, altogether independently of her fear of him, could have no motive whatsoever for playing such a foolish and cruel prank.

At last he was about to go away and return to his home with no pleasant feelings in his heart, when a slight

figure, quite unlike the sturdy forms of the servant-maids, appeared at the door. He knew instantly who it was and moved a little forward. The figure passed into the darkness of the yard, and very soon he heard a light footfall near him on the dry needles of the fir-trees. He stood motionless, and after a pause, long and painful, he heard his name whispered in the darkness. He waited for a repetition of it and then he stepped forward and confronted the girl.

"Well!" he said. "I'm here!"

"Dick!" she said. "Is that you? Then you got my message."

"I was told," he said, "that you wished to see me. I didn't believe it. But I kem to know what you could want with me."

"Not much," she said humbly, "but pace and forgiveness. There's no use in keepin' things up forever."

"What things?" he asked. "And who's keepin' 'em up?"

"Oh, Dick," she cried passionately, "you know well what I mane. I want you and Ned to be frinds, and to forgive and forget. Sure, 'tisin't right nor raysonable to be keepin' things up forever."

"Is that what you wanted me for?" he cried passionately. "Av it is, go back now to your drinkin' and dancin', and take this from me. That nayther here nor hereafter, in life or in death, will I ever forgive the man who wronged me and mine."

"That's a hard word, Dick," the girl said and he knew now she was weeping in the darkness, "an' a word you'll be sore and sorry for some day. I was only actin' for the besht. Whin I see all the naybors gethered here and injyin' theirselves, and whin I looked across the fields from the barn and seen your house dark and lonesome, I sed to myself, That's not right! We must share with the naybors whatever the Good God has given us!"

"And do you think, Martha Sullivan," said the thick, husky voice, deliberately ignoring her married name,

"that I and mine are thramps and beggars, like thim gypsies down at the ould castle, that we should be be-houlden to you and Kerins for a male of vittles? Begor, ma'am, you have become high and mighty in your notions, since you come up from the sayside, where manny a time I seen you with a kish of say-weed on your back, and glad to have praties and cockles for your dinner. Go back now to your party and shtop there; an' if you have any charity to bestow, give it to thim as wants it. The Duggans, plase God, have enough and to waste for the rest of their lives."

"I see there's no good in talkin' to you, Dick," the girl replied. "The black hatred is in your heart — and all for nothin'."

"For nothin'?" he echoed, in a sudden blaze of anger. "Is it nothin' that every morning I rise, I must see the land that should be mine and the crops that should be mine and the cattle that should be mine in the hands of a black stranger? Is that nothin'? Is it nothin', whin I stepped over the ditch and was harmin' nobody to be tould to get out of that or that he'd blow me, body and sowl, into hell? Is it nothin' that at every fair, market, and cross it is thrun in my face that I've shown the white feather and that I'm more afeard of Kerins's shooting-irons than of Almighty God? And is it nothin'," he said, lowering his voice to a whisper, in which were mingled affection and fury, "that he tuk from me the girl of my heart, for whom I'd open my veins and shed the last dhrop of my blood?"

The words touched her deeply, as she heard the despair of the man uttered there in the darkness. But she had to defend herself and she said:

"But there was never a hand and word betune us, Dick, nor any promise; and sure, it wasn't your fault, but you couldn't expect me to grow up into a withered ould woman, like Annie Reilly and Bride Gallagher!"

"No-o-o!" he said, prolonging the word, as if he were doubtful whether he ought make the admission, "an'

I'm not faultin' you, though you might have spoke to me about it. I'd have released you, av I saw 'twas for your good. But how can I forgive the man that first tuk away from me the place I wanted to bring you, and then tuk you from me in the bargain?"

"But sure what's inded can't be minded, Dick," said the girl, "an' now can't you make up with Ned Kerins an' let us be frinds and naybors?"

"Av I was as false as him, I'd say so," said Dick sullenly, "and then bide my time. But, because I'm a true man, I'll not lie to you nor God, I've an account to settle with the man you call your husband, an' whin it is settled, there'll be no arrares."

She heard his footsteps retreating across the dry grass and leaves; she heard him leaping over the ditch and the soft thud of his feet, as he descended into the ploughed field, but she stood still, irresolute and frightened. A low laugh in the shrubbery woke her up to a sense of her position, and, shaking off the stupor in which her interview with Dick Duggan had left her, she returned, silent and thoughtful, to the house.

If there was one subject more frequently debated than another during these revels at Crossfields, it was the sudden departure of Annie O'Farrell with young Wycherly for South Africa. To their unsophisticated minds — unsophisticated in the sense that they knew nothing of modern life, although they had a strong bias toward regarding things in an unfavourable light — it was nothing short of a grave scandal. "Elopement" means dreadful things to an Irish congregation. It means certain denunciation both from the parish priest and from the bishop in his triennial visitation. It means the possibility of excommunication. The dread of the thing has come down from the times not very remote, when abduction was a capital offence in the eyes of the law and of the Church.

That there could be any mitigation, or reason for what

they deemed the offence, never dawned upon them, for they could not believe that any young lady could sacrifice herself at the call of duty, to nurse, or help, or comfort what they were pleased to call "a dying kinat."¹

Hence it was warmly debated whether the parish priest, with Roman or Spartan determination, would stigmatize the offence on the following Sunday in his wonted manner. Or would he depute his curate to do so, if it were too much for his own feelings? Not one, who knew his character, dreamt for a moment that he would allow the offence to pass unrebuked.

"Let us see now," said Dick Duggan savagely, "what he'll do. He has spared no one for twenty years. Let us see now will he spare his own flesh and blood. If it was wrong in poor crachures, who had nayther sinse nor ejucation, it was doubly wrong in her who had both."

The thought that was agitating the parish was also the thought which was uppermost in the mind of the bereaved and desolate man. Whatever excuses he might make for the action taken by Annie O'Farrell and whatever might be its justification in her own circle, there could be no doubt it was a subject of much talk and a source of much disedification amongst his own primitive people. And how could he pass it over? On the other hand, how could he stand on the altar steps and profess his own shame and the ignominy attached to the conduct of his niece? He never knew till then how deeply he was attached to her, how much he appreciated her talents, her beauty, her singular gifts of mind and person. And he never knew till then how proud he was of her, and how much she reflected upon him all those various excellences that seemed to have grown with her growth and strengthened with her strength. And now he was face to face with an ordeal that seemed beyond human endurance to encounter. He had to drag her name and his own pride in the dust before a people, some of whom, at least,

¹"Gnat" — a term of contempt.

would rejoice at his humiliation and mock at his sorrow. In a week he seemed to have aged ten years; and when on Saturday afternoon, Henry Liston came down to recite the Office and take directions for the coming week, he found a stooped and wrecked man bent in despair over the wintry fire.

The good young curate suggested that it would be impossible for his pastor to celebrate his Mass in the morning, he was so broken and wretched; and he requested permission to summon some neighbouring priest to supply the first Mass. But the old man wouldn't listen to it. He was never better in his life. He would drive over as usual and say the Mass of the Blessed Virgin and preach as usual to his congregation.

But in the evening a hurried message was sent up to the young priest that the pastor would abide by his advice, and that he would be obliged if, even at that late hour, he would invite some other priest to drive over and celebrate in the morning. The depression of the evening and the loneliness of his situation broke down his iron resolution; and for the first time in a quarter of a century a strange priest stood at the altar in Doonvarragh. With a feeling akin to defeat the old priest said Mass in his private oratory. He knew what was expected and what would be said.

"No matter!" he repeated to himself. "Next Sunday I shall be there and they will hear what I have to say!"

During the week many and various were the comments that were made. The great bulk of the people were delighted that they were spared the agony of witnessing their pastor's self-humiliation; and they hoped now that the thing was over forever. The malcontents were delighted. He had shown the white feather. He never spared others. He spared his own and he spared himself.

Dick Duggan was jubilant. He knew, he said, all along how it would be. The sharp tongue was blunted and the angry voice was stilled, when the question touched

himself. In the tap-room of the public house, Dick waxed eloquent on the misdemeanour of which Annie O'Farrell had been guilty, and he scornfully refuted every argument in her favour. He became a fierce zealot of virtue — an indignant defender of morals — a fanatical opponent of everything that could offend the sacred proprieties of life.

"If thim in high places," he said, "are allowed to break the law of God an' no wan can open their lips agin thim, we might as well all become paygans and haythens."

He repeated the same thing in the family circle several times that week under the Dutch courage which drink gave him. But at last he got the fierce answer from his mother, who was heart-broken at the very idea of her priest's sorrow and shame:

"Divil a much throuble you'd have, and the likes of you, in becoming paygans and haythens. You needn't turn your coats inside out, begor. For it is writ in big letters over every inch of ye. Go down now to the 'Cross,' and shpake to your aiquals in blagarding; but, whilst yere undher this roof, keep a civil tongue in yere head."

And Dick took his mother's advice literally. The tap-room was his theatre, his pulpit and bench, where to a plentiful crop of ne'er-do-wells and tipplers like himself, he could expound, without contradiction, his views on politics and religion and every subject that came within the bounds of human knowledge.

He found the place so pleasant, in contrast with his home, that he spent the night there with boon companions, and between speechifying and scandal-mongering and card-playing, the time passed pleasantly by, so that when Dick woke up about one o'clock next day, he hadn't the slightest recollection of the events of the previous night. But his throat was very dry, almost burning, and he asked in a weak and tremulous voice for a "hair of the dog that bit him." It braced him up a little and then, with some difficulty, he swallowed a cup

of tea and ate an egg. He would now have moved homeward, having had quite enough eloquence and drink for a month, but there had been a "big fair" that day at the market-town of M—— six or seven miles away, and in the afternoon the farmers from that part of the country were returning home and, of course, their horses would persist in stopping at "the Cross." It was a peculiarity in those animals, and it was universal. No horse could pass the house without stopping at least until his owner could alight and ask the time of day.

Hence Dick Duggan, meeting so many "frinds," had to take a "thrate" and another and another, under penalty of giving deadly offence, until his old hilarity and pugnaciousness came back to him and the depression and blue devils of the morning had vanished. Hence he became eloquent again on the pusillanimity and cowardice of his pastor; and, when he was rallied, because he was not invited to the "house-warming" at Kerins's, his face grew dark and sullen and he muttered something about a *Banshee* and a *Caoine* again.

"You missed it, Dick," said a jovial farmer, who was reputed to be a grand hand at making a joke and a poor hand at receiving one, "you missed it. There never was such *ceol*¹ in the country before. All we wanted was to see you dancin' with the young missus."

Dick Duggan half-stifled an oath and cried:

"No more of that, Goggin!"

But Goggin persisted.

"I never saw a happier man than Ned Kerins," he said. "An' sure he ought to be. Thade Sullivan tould me he walked the farm twice, and begor, if you threw in a needle, it would grow into a crowbar, so deep is the sile. And, sure, the whole counthry gives it up to Martha Sullivan for beauty. She'd dance on eggs and wouldn't break them."

"There may be another dance soon," said Dick, seeing all eyes turned upon him with a smile of pitying contempt

¹ Fun, amusement.

as the victim of circumstances. "There may be another dance soon, and the feet won't touch the ground ayther."

"Take care of the shooting-irons, Dick," said Goggin, going away. "He'd let daylight into you as soon as he'd say: Thrapshticks!"

Dick looked after him with bleared and bloodshot eyes. Then, continuing the fun, another farmer said maliciously:

"There's a lot of talk about the parish priesht's niece and Wycherly, and about his showing the white feather yesterday."

"There'll be more!" said Dick sullenly.

"'Tis a pity he'd be left off so aisy," said the man, winking at the crowd. "Only that I belongs to another part of the parish, I'd think nothin' of calling him to ordher meself."

"There's no wan here to do it," said a wag, "but Dick. He's the only wan that has spunk in him."

"Yes! But 'tisn't every wan would face the ould lion in his den," said the other.

Dick was looking out into the darkness of the February evening, which had closed in gloomy and miserable; but the evil words were rankling in his heart. His pride had been stung sorely by the allusions to the "house-warming" and his own conspicuous, if expected, absence. And now the same evil pride was stimulated by the lying flattery of his tempters. Was he the only man in the parish who would dare face the parish priest? So it was thought, and so it was expected. Half-drunk and wholly mad-dened, he swiftly made up his mind.

"Give me another half-wan!" he said to the girl at the counter.

"You've had enough, Dick," said the girl compassionately. "You ought go home. Remember, you are out since yesterday."

"Give it me!" he said fiercely. "I've work to do!"

The girl filled his glass half-full of water. He tossed it off in one gulp and went out.

The old pastor, the learned theologian, was sunk in his arm-chair near the winter's fire. Humbled, chastened, weary of the world, anxious for his final rest, he had tried to banish the spectres of troublesome thoughts by fixing his mind on some subtle theological question, which admitted diversity of opinion and where he could balance with that dialectical skill, of which he was so justly proud, the decisions of different schools. But it was in vain. The everpresent personal troubles would obtrude themselves and push off the stage of thought the less troublesome intruders. And then would commence again the anguish and the sorrow, the anger and the bitterness, which he vainly tried to exorcise forever.

A loud single knock startled him a little, as it echoed through the house.

"I'm in no mood for visitors," he thought. "They ought to know that well enough now."

And the old housekeeper, ageing with her master, opened the door, and, closing it carefully after her, said:

"This is Duggan, your reverence — Dick Duggan; an' he's the worse for drink."

"Tell him I can't see him now," said the priest peremptorily.

The woman took the message and soon returned, saying:

"He says he must see your reverence. He has a question to ask you!"

And the priest rose up, felt his way along the edge of the table, and went into the hall.

"You wish to see me," he said, peering into the darkness, "what do you want?"

He was quite close to the thickset, wiry form of the man over whom he towered, head and shoulders.

"I want to ax your reverence wan question, an' only wan," said Dick thickly, as he looked into the black glasses that glared down upon him.

"Well? Be quick about it," said the priest.

"I want to ax your reverence," said Dick, looking

around him in the effort to frame his question, "what was the rayson you didn't shpake of your niece off av the althar yesterday for running away wid young Wycherly —"

He stopped, for the terrible grip of the old man was on his throat in an instant and he could only feebly gurgle out:

"Le' me go! You're chokin' me! What did I say?"

"You blackguard," said the priest, pushing him against the door of the other room and holding him there, "how dare you come into the house of an old man like me to insult me?"

"I'm only sayin' what everybody in the parish do be sayin'," said Dick, frantically struggling to unloose the iron grip. "Unhand me! You're chokin' me, or be this and be that —"

Here, in fury or anger or terror, he struck out wildly and smote the face of the priest between the eyes, smashing the dark glasses. The next moment, as happened so many years ago, he felt himself caught up and swung round and round the hall and then, with the impetus thus gained, cast out into the darkness with terrible violence. He reeled and staggered forward a few paces. Then fell face downward on the sharp gravel. He heard the hall-door slammed with violence and the lock shot and the rattle of a heavy chain. And he remembered no more.

When he awoke to consciousness and recalled what had happened, his only thought was one of fearful and overwhelming remorse. *He had struck a priest!* It was the culmination of his life of anger and hatred, and he woke up as a man wakes from the horrible delirium of fever and sees things for the first time in all their naked magnitude. Men feel thus in the pursuit of every vice. They rush forward madly, heedlessly, deliriously, until some crime is consummated, and then there is a sudden and awful consciousness that this was only the terminus

— the unlooked-for, but inevitable terminus of their life of guilt.

He rose up and, finding something cold trickling down his forehead and blinding his eyes, he put up his hand and instantly knew by the clammy feel that it was blood. He brushed it aside, smearing his face all over with the ghastly thing. He then looked wistfully towards the house, hoping that a light might be shining to beckon him back to forgiveness. But no! All was dark and the outline of the presbytery looked dismal and solemn against the background of the night. Then he remembered the slamming of the door, the shooting of the bolt, and the rattling of the chain.

“May God in heaven forgive me!” he thought. “There is no longer pardon amongst men!”

He then began to wonder what time of night it was; but he had no guide. He remembered it was about half-past six when he left the public-house, and it must have been seven o’clock when he stood in the priest’s hall. And then he had a faint idea that when the dining-room was opened he had heard amid his drunken excitement the clock chiming ‘seven’ on the mantelpiece. But how long ago was that, he couldn’t tell. He had no idea of how long he lay prostrate and insensible on the gravelled walk.

He made his way slowly homeward in the darkening night. He passed the public-house on the way. It was shut. Therefore, it was late. He pushed toward home more rapidly and began at last to mount the hill, all the time debating in a stupid, dazed manner whether he would make a clear confession of guilt at home. Then he decided that that wouldn’t do. It would draw upon him the fierce reproaches of his mother without a chance of forgiveness. The best thing to do now was to get into the byre where the cattle were; to wash himself free of his blood-stains; to see if the family had yet retired to rest, and be guided by that. He turned from the main road into the *boreen* or bypath that led to his father’s

house, walking slowly and meditatively. His mind now was fully made up about his guilt and how he was to purge himself of it. He would speak to no man of what he had done, and he knew well that the priest would never breathe it. Then, the following Sunday, just after the sermon, he, Dick Duggan, would step forward from the midst of the congregation and make a confession of his guilt to the world, no matter if he were excommunicated afterwards. He had some dim notion that to strike a priest was punished with excommunication, but he had never heard of the *ipso facto*, etc. But he heeded nothing now. He would confess his guilt and abide by his punishment.

He entered the stable-yard. All was still. No light burned in the house. The place was silent and dark as death. He turned into the byre and groped round for the tub of water which he knew was always left there. He found it, took off his coat, and was stooping to dash the water in his face when suddenly the light of a lantern was flashed on him and he was seized roughly from behind. He shouted and struggled until he saw two constables in front ready to give assistance.

"I arrest you on a charge of wilful murder in the name of the Queen," said the sergeant. "Now don't make any noise, but go quietly; and remember every word you say will be quoted against you."

As he felt the steel handcuffs slipped on his wrists and heard the click of the lock, he said:

"My God! Did I kill him?"

"Well, he's dead!" said the sergeant.

"I suppose I'll swing for it, but I richly deserve it. Can I see my mother for a minute?"

"Better not!" said the officer. "They're all in bed, and it would do no good."

He submitted quietly and was led along, seeing but the hand of God in his misfortune and overwhelmed by the dreadful thought that he had committed a crime never heard of before in Ireland — the murder of a priest.

As they moved onward in the dark, he heard one of the officers speak of Ned Kerins and a pike and his body taken to the public-house for an inquest. He stopped suddenly and cried to the police to stop.

"Shtop," said he, while the perspiration rolled down his face, "shtop, as ye value an immortal sowl."

"Well, what's the matter?" said the sergeant.

"You said now he was dead. Did you mane the parish priesht? or some wan else?"

"I mean Ned Kerins, who was stabbed to death on the M—— road between six and seven o'clock this evening."

"Ned Kerins — stabbed! Oh! is that all?" said Dick, as he felt an overwhelming weight lifted from his conscience.

"That's all, and quite enough for you, I should say," replied the officer. "Now say no more, if you have sense."

CHAPTER XLII

A RED SUNSET

It was an hour before the time when Dick Duggan left the public-house to pay his ill-fated visit to the parish priest, that Pete the Gypsy tackled his pony to the cart, which was already loaded with six bales of what purported to be compressed hay carefully packed and roped for transmission to the City.

"It is the last?" said the old gypsy woman, his mother, coming out of the castle to see. "You're sure you're leaving nothing behind?"

"Nothing, little mother," said Pete gaily. "It is the last bale, which we have haled up from the cave."

"Then I'm glad of it," she said. "It was an ill-work from the beginning, especially as you had a coward for comrade."

"That's true, little mother," he replied. "If he had been one of our own we might have carried on the business forever."

"Never mind," she said. "Get back, little father, as quick as possible. I'm always afraid you'll fall into the hands of the engroes."

He laughed.

"That's for fools," he said. "Never fear for me. Keep the fire lighting and the pot boiling. I'll be hungry enough when I return."

Pete had always managed to get his smuggled cargoes into the station at M—— just as the up goods train was due, so that there should be no time for inquisitive porters or detectives to show any unusual curiosity about his property. If he were early, he generally loitered outside

the gates and crept in in time to push his packages into the van as the train sped forward.

This evening he was slightly late, and when he got out of the breen and on the crest of the hill, he whipped the pony smartly forwards. Strange to say, however, this night he took a slightly circuitous route along the road that skirted Crossfields and farther down by the farm occupied by the Duggans. And, as he passed one field in the latter farm, he noticed a pike hanging down from a half-cut rick of hay, and with the instincts of his tribe he instantly appropriated it, laying it athwart the large cubes which were compressed with iron clamps. He chuckled to himself as he thought of Dick's profanity when he discovered in the morning that his pike was gone, and he then pushed rapidly forward. His object in taking the circuitous route was to avoid the farmers who might be coming home late from the fair and who, in the usual spirit of inquisitiveness, might put awkward questions. On these journeys Pete wished for a solitary road and no company.

He was about two miles from the town when, on turning a bend in the road, he nearly drove into the gig or tax-cart on which Ned Kerins was driving home from the fair. After the usual complimentary curses that are elicited on such an occasion, Pete was passing on, but Ned Kerins was in a more sympathetic mood. He had sold some cattle early in the morning and bought calves which he had forwarded to his farm by his servant. And he had then remained, meeting friends, receiving congratulations on his marriage, and passing from public-house to public-house, where, however, he was judicious enough to dispense many "thrates" and take but few. He was quite sober, therefore, but somewhat elated by his success in business at the fair and all the complimentary things that were said about his marriage; and, as the evening was long for him, he thought he would like to delay the gypsy with a little kindly conversation.

Pete, however, was impatient and anxious about his cargo.

"Glad to hear that you had such a good fair, Mr. Kerins," he said, pushing on his pony. "Well, good night. I must be going."

"Don't be in such a hurry, Pete," said the farmer, blocking the road. "The gaugers aren't out to-night."

"The gaugers? What gaugers?" said Pete, angry at the allusion.

"Oh, what gaugers?" said Kerins mockingly. "Come now, Pete, don't you know that every man, woman, and child in the parish is aware of your trade? And sure no one begrudges it to you."

"I think, Mr. Kerins," said Pete sternly, "the sooner you get back to your wife's company, the better for you and her. Her old spark might be hanging around."

He again tried to get forward, but Kerins was now furious at the allusion and savagely demanded an explanation.

Pete laughed and threw out obscurer hints. Then the farmer, with an affectation of laughter, turned back the joke upon the gypsy, whilst he swung his heavy whip ominously along the floor of his gig.

"Give us the filling of one pipe, tinker," he said. "You keep the real thing, I'm tould — only the best Caven-dish and cigars. Give us the filling of one pipe — and I'll pay you."

And he plunged the handle of his whip towards one of the bales, driving it into the stuff.

The gypsy uttered a fearful curse and, again returning to the point where Kerins was most vulnerable, he bade him return home at once.

Whatever was the poignant word he used, down came the heavy whip of the farmer on his shoulders, and the next instant the gypsy, seizing the pike, lunged forward with all his strength and the sharp edge of one steel prong entered the garments and the flesh as easily as a needle

runs through a pincushion. Without a word, the farmer fell forward dead.

Not a shadow of remorse crossed the mind of the gypsy. With a few rapid reflections, he concluded that his own best policy was to return home as speedily as possible. He thought of going first into town and notifying the police that he had found Kerins murdered on the high road, but this might give occasion for awkward questionings. He trusted to his usual luck to get home without meeting anyone who would recognize him, and to bury his own part in absolute oblivion. He carefully drew the gig and horse on which the dead man lay into one of those recesses where contractors pile up heaps of road metalling for convenience. He then listened attentively. Not a sound came up along the road to the town, whose lights were twinkling beneath him. Not a sound came along the road he had travelled from the sea. A thick blackness hung down over the whole landscape, except quite close where the white road shone. He listened once more. Not a sound except the crunching of the grass, where Kerins's horse, unconscious of his fearful burden, was feeding. The gypsy turned his pony's head homewards and in an hour was in the breen that led to his house. Here he paused. He had not met a single human being by the way. The road was as solitary as a desert, nothing but the sounds of his pony's feet awoke the echoes. He undid the harness, took out bale after bale of the smuggled goods, which he poised for a moment on the top of the broad ditch which formed a rampart against the dangers of the huge chasm that yawned beneath. Then silently he dropped bale after bale into the gulf, where it was broken to dust in the fall, and then, when all had disappeared, he took to smoking and pondering on the singular thing that had occurred.

The suddenness and swiftness of the thing should have alarmed him and made him reflect. But there was no room for reflection in the man's soul, unless when suddenly jumping up from the place where he was seated,

he remembered with a pang of soul and a curse on his lips that he had forgotten to rob the murdered man.

"And he told me he had a splendid price for his cattle that morning; and probably the notes were lying within an inch of my hand. I deserve to be caught and hanged for such bungling."

A light gleaming far down near the sea reminded him that he was expected to supper. And he accordingly felt hungry by anticipation. A light gleamed in one of the windows of Rohira and he gave a thought to the lonely man, whose race appeared to be extinguished forever. He looked back across the dark fields and saw the lights in Crossfields, where the young widow was even then preparing for the home-coming of her spouse. But these things did not touch him. It was only when he saw far down to the east the solitary candle that broke the gloom around the farm of the Duggans, that he showed some feeling, but it was that of the ape and the tiger.

"The rope is around your neck, Dick," he said, "so tight that only one man in all the world can loose it. And he won't, Dick!"

He again harnessed his pony and drove leisurely downwards to the castle.

"You're late, little father," said Judith, as her son entered the room, having stabled the pony. "Was the train late?"

"A little," he said. "But I'm hungry, mother, desperately hungry. What have you to eat?"

"You'll get some broiled fish and potatoes," she said, "over there on the table. I put a cloth over them to keep them warm. But you got the goods away?"

"Never fear, little mother," he said impatiently, "they are now where the hand of the gauger will never touch them."

"But the money?" she said. "Is that safe?"

"Safe as the Bank!" he said. "They are in my power and they know it."

"Ha! ha!" said the old crone. "It is good to have

people in your power, little father. Is it not? It is good to have people in your power. For then you can crush them, if you like!"

"It is good!" he said, with his mouth full of food. "It is a good thing that men should fear you. Fear never changes. Love changes often. It is good to have men in your power!"

"What's that stain on your right sleeve, little father?" the old gypsy said, touching a dark spot where a tiny stream had trickled down. "Why, 'tis blood. You must be hurt somewhere!"

The gypsy started up so violently that he almost overthrew the table, and he pulled with his left hand the right sleeve toward him. But he instantly recovered his self-possession:

"I brushed past some dead meat in the town," he said. "There was a crowd around a ballad-singer, and they pushed him inwards. Ugh! what an ugly thing is cow's blood!"

And he sat down again, but his appetite seemed to have diminished.

"Have you got any spirits, mother?" he said at length. "That blood has given me quite a turn. Where's Cora?"

"Over there asleep!" said the gypsy woman, rising up and procuring the bottle of gin for her son. "But, little father, was not the pony in danger, and what he carried, when you were pushed away from him in the crowd?"

"Not at all!" said Pete, who was beginning to think that his mother was more curious than prudent. "I left him for a moment standing at the Post Office whilst I went in to mail something. It was passing by I got jammed in the crowd and got that nasty stain."

"Throw off your jacket," said Judith, "and I'll wash out that stain. It is before me all the night!"

"What is before you?" said her son angrily.

"Blood!" she said.

"Blood?" he echoed with some faint alarm rising up within him.

"Yes," she went on, looking intently at the fire. "I have seen that stain everywhere to-night. I saw it in the sun, when he was setting, a dark purple blotch, although the day was dim and cloudy. I took it away in my eyes then and it is before me everywhere. And down there where the peat and pine are glowing, I see it fall, fall, and drop into the ashes and go out in a flare and a hiss of horrid steam. See what a little thing now casts its shadow before it. You go into town on business and by chance rub the sleeve of your coat against that dripping meat, and lo! it haunts me all the evening."

"Keep that for the farmers and their servant-girls, mother," he replied angrily. "Here, take the old jacket and clean it, or burn it. It is not worth much, and I've got my leather jerkin. Perhaps it will take the ugly vision away from your eyes."

"No! no!" cried the old dame, handling the jacket curiously. "It is a good garment yet, and we are poor, very poor, little father. We cannot afford to lose such a fine garment, such a handsome garment, such a costly garment. And it is only a stain, a little stain, a tiny little stain of oxen's blood — a mere cow, a dead cow, a worthless cow, and it will come out so nice that no one will ever notice it, or say, 'What is that ugly stain, little Pete, that long dark stain, little Pete, there on your right arm above the elbow?'"

All the time she was turning over the almost ragged jacket in her hands, studying it carefully, inside and outside, whilst her hopeful son went over and bent down where the children were hived together promiscuously; and Cora, the insolent and the vigilant Cora, was in the midst of them. She appeared to be dead asleep, breathing softly as an infant, one brown arm under her head and one resting softly on the ragged garments which formed the bed-clothes. After a long and careful study he came back, and again the old gypsy challenged him.

"See here, little father," she said, "across the shoulder is a cut, not a deep cut, nor a severe cut, but such a cut

as would be made by a stick or a whip. It stretches around the back, and, look! where it leaves a deep furrow amidst the thick dust. I suppose 'tis where you slung your whip across your shoulders as the peasants do, and it left this mark and cut, not a deep cut, but just such as would be made by a knife or a whip. But the whip should be struck deep and strong. Are you hurt, little father? Let me see!"

She dropped the jacket to examine the shoulder and back of her son, but he drew back and kicked the ragged jacket into the fire, dragging down the blocks of burning timber and stamping them with his foot savagely.

"There!" he said. "You make such a fuss about nothing. Let the old rags burn now. They are only fit for burning, and you, good mother, are spared the trouble of washing. Good night! and be not troubled in your dreams. The sky will not be red to-morrow!"

He waited until he saw the last rag in the jacket shrivel up and consume in the flame, even to the horn buttons. Then he kicked the red ashes to and fro and went whistling to bed.

The old gypsy remained crouched over the extinguished fire for at least an hour, wondering, dreaming, guessing, surmising.

She was roused by a light hand laid on her shoulder in the darkness, and the girl, Cora, whispered in her ear:

"There hath been some evil thing wrought to-night. I, too, dreamed it. But say nothing. It would not be wise to say anything, good-mother! It would not be wise."

The dead man lay on his back on a narrow table supported on trestles in a public-house in the town of M—. A messenger from Rohira, riding posthaste to meet the up-mail was nearly flung off his horse when he shied at a gig and pony near the road. He was too hurried to wait, but he saw that a heavy figure, as of a man in drink, was leaning over the dashboard, almost on the animal's back.

He reported the matter at the barracks, and the murdered man was found and brought in, and word was sent to his widow. The dead man lay still, the peace of eternity on his face; the weapon, which had let out his strong life, was by his side. There was rushing and weeping and the tumult of terror at Crossfields. Far down in the stable at Duggan's, the officers of the law were waiting and lurking in the darkness for the supposed criminal. But Pete, the gypsy, having destroyed all traces of his guilt, slept the sleep of the just man, there in the old castle by the sea.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE AMABELE VALLEY

THE tumult of emotions that swept the soul of Dion Wycherly, the *Ba-as*, the successful miner and rancher, on discovering his brother under such novel and unexpected circumstances, is indescribable. Delight at meeting him again, for the brothers loved each other; pain at seeing him so emaciated and wasted, and with such little hope of recovery; wonder and admiration at the bravery of the young girl who had sacrificed herself so nobly; and just an incipient pang of pleasure that she was not Jack's wife, were the chief thoughts and feelings that swayed his mind during these days, which he spent there, plotting and speculating for their and his own future.

The recognition between the brothers was most affecting. When Annie O'Farrell had told Dion all that was to be told about his brother, even down to his dreaming, which was not dreaming at all, but perfect consciousness of Dion's presence, they decided it were best that Jack should be told that his dream was a reality, and that his brother had come to seek and find him. When Annie had prepared the way, she retired from the little hut where Jack's hammock swung easily, and Dion entered.

The poor, pale invalid looked up for a moment at the tall, athletic form that towered above him. Then, stretching forth his bony hand, he said, while his eyes filled with tears:

"I knew it was you. I knew it could be none other than you."

For some moments the two brothers continued to gaze

at one another, holding their hands clasped. Then, realizing the tremendous contrast between them — his own riotous and exultant health, and the sad wreck of the young life that lay beneath him — Dion suddenly dropped his brother's hand and went over to examine some little photos or pictures that were pinned to the wall. Then, brushing aside a tear, he came back and seated himself near the hammock where his dying brother lay. After a few observations, he said:

"Miss O'Farrell has told me a good deal, Jack; but not all. You were in the same hospital?"

"Yes!" said his brother. "We were in the same hospital. But we seldom spoke, beyond the mere morning or evening salute. But she was watching over me like a sister, and I didn't know it. I say, Dion, do you know anything about women?"

"Not much," said Dion. "I've seen few here but a few native gins, and they seem to be only one degree below, and yet in another sense far above the animal creation."

"Yes! That's what I've been thinking. But I have seen a good many; and the strange thing is, they don't know the awful power they have for right or wrong."

He ceased a moment; and Dion did not stop the moralizing, although he wanted to get at facts.

"But what I'm coming to is this," said Jack, as if communing with himself. "You meet a hundred of them and they're all alike, cut according to the same pattern, turned out and groomed *à la mode*. Then, one day, you meet another, and you say at once, 'That's not a woman. That's something more. God thought a good deal before he made *her*.'"

He paused for a moment. And then, as if recalling something, he said:

"You mustn't call her Miss O'Farrell any more, Dion. You must call her Annie. She's our sister."

"She might be offended," said Dion dubiously. "It isn't usual, you know."

"Never fear!" said Jack confidently. "But call her

Annie — nothing else — mind! Well, I was saying, she was watching me, and I didn't know it. Lord bless you, Di, we know nothing. But one day she cut me dead in one of the corridors of the hospital; and, after a few days' agony, I asked explanations. Afraid? I was more afraid of her than of Almighty God, or even old Stanihurst himself. Well, I got the explanations. Then one night I got a hemorrhage on the streets and was carried to the hospital. Some day before I die, I'll tell you what occasioned the hemorrhage, but not now — "

"Jack, you are not going to die," said his brother passionately. "You mustn't die. God won't take you away now when I have found you and can give you all you want in this world. You and Annie will come away with me from this infernal hole, and I'll put you in that climate and place where, if you never had a lung, you'd grow one. Cheer up, old man! There are many happy days before us yet!"

But Jack shook his head.

"It was a forlorn hope, Di," he said; "a forlorn hope — my coming out here. I know too much. But it was some gain with my torn lungs to get here, if only to breathe a little. But I cannot last long, and I'm not sorry for it."

To which Dion could answer nothing.

"I've told Annie where I'm to be buried — high up there on the summit, where the sun will strike first in the morning and rest his last beams at night — "

"No, no, no, no," said Dion; "you and Annie must come away with me. It is not far — only a couple of hundred miles, and we'll do it by easy stages. If you don't like the train, I can manage to get you taken along by the coolies, so that there'll be no jolting, and we can rest where we please. I'll talk to Miss O'Farrell about it, if you let me. You won't die just yet, Jack, old man! And, if you were to die in a few years or so, I want to put you where I can see your grave and remember you."

"That's not of much consequence, Di," said the sick

boy. "You are not going to remain here and give up Rohira and all the old associations."

"But Ned — you're forgetting, Jack. Ned has Rohira. It is his by every right."

"Ned won't trouble Rohira," said Jack. "Some day, when I'm better, I'll tell you all. But when I'm gone — well, let us say to Heaven — you and Annie will go back to Ireland and make everything square for poor Pap, before he dies."

And somehow Dion did not seem to think the project undesirable.

After some hesitation and doubts as to whether the invalid could bear a long journey inland, they at last decided to go. And as Jack was impatient and irritable, he thought it better to go by rail, instead of being jolted through the bush on the backs of black coolies. It meant two days' weary travelling in slow trains under burning suns and with the fine dust of the tropics filling every nook and crevice of the carriage. But, thanks to the assiduity and skill of his companion, the poor, broken life still held on until it was established in the handsome bungalow on a slope of the Amabele Valley, where Dion had fixed what he thought was his permanent home.

Everything that wealth, utilized by brotherly love, could do to contribute to the comfort of the patient and his nurse, was now done, for Dion seemed to rule here as a little prince, who commanded the allegiance and services of white men and black in the region all around.

And surely, if there were a place on earth calculated to win back to health and vigour a life that was fast passing away, it would be the very spot where Dion had built, in a style of unusual magnificence for those parts, a pavilion, or bungalow, and surrounded it with every aspect and accident of luxury attainable at such a distance from civilization. The house was very extensive, though there was but one story; but it was so ingeniously arranged that suites of apartments seemed to open in every direction; and in every direction there were visible

from the high French windows, that opened on a veranda, glimpses of mountains, far-away and snow-covered, Stormberg or Roggeveld Ranges, taking on themselves hues that varied in the atmospheric changes, but were always clearly limned and defined in the pellucid and crystalline air. Through the vast vistas of valleys, too, that opened up the avenues of these mountains were to be seen plumage of palms and foliage of forests, where clustered in the shape and size of trees plants that are dwarfed in our colder climate. And in the immediate vicinity of the house, vast clumps of pelargoniums and hydrangeas flung out their burning blossoms to the sun and wind, whilst deep down in moist shelters, where the air was always laden with hot vaporous mists, there grew in rich but unhealthy profusion, great bulbous plants of the *amaryllideæ* or *irideæ* types, luscious and beautiful, but reminding one too much of miasmata and the deadly fecundity of marshlands and the African Campagna. Besides the natural flora of these rich tropical climes, Dion had gathered into a conservatory still rarer specimens of plants and flowers indigenous to India and the Southern Isles; and through forests of imported palms, the many-coloured birds, the secretary, the weaver, the bird of paradise, leaped and swung and hung; and underneath, the little jerboa and cunning monkeys flashed and chattered, and mocked the lazy lizards and tortoises, that preferred to lie flat and still in the burning sun. Down along the valley a stream flowed perennially; and Dion had brought its waters into his gardens, where in pond and fountain and basin they cooled the atmosphere to sight and touch and hearing. Here Dion ensconced his dying brother; and no modern dread of contagion diminished in the least measure the boundless exercise of fraternal kindness which was shed around the dying boy. And here, too, by daily intercourse and the common love they bore the boy, and by the deeper interpretation of one another's character, there grew up between the great rancher and miner and

the girl, who had sacrificed so much at the call of charity, that deep, reverential awe of each other, as of something divine, that sooner or later deepens into a holier feeling, which does not expel the divine element, but transforms it into something more human. And Jack saw it and rejoiced; and in his next letter home, which Annie wrote for him, he put in a postscript before he sealed the envelope:

"I think it is all right, dear old Pap. When I'm gone, order Dion home at once; and tell him he must not travel alone."

And strange to say, from the moment the idea was suggested, Dion's thoughts did turn homeward. For just as the savage, however used to civilization, will, on returning to his tribe, cast off the garments of civilized peoples and refuse to speak their language, and clothe himself again in the blankets of savagery, because all the time he had been dreaming of the forest and the wigwam and the hunt, so the civilized man casts aside the attractions of the desert and the jungle, of the forest and the veldt, because the mists and vapours of the North come to him in his dreams, and will not let him rest in a soil that never gave him his birthright. And yet, Dion knew it would mean a wrench for him to dissociate himself so suddenly from all that he had prized these last few years; and prized all the more because he had won his wealth and honour by upright and worthy means.

One of those lovely days, which are spring with us, but which put on all the splendours of summer in tropical climes, Dion told his brother how he had come to be a wealthy rancher, and to be venerated as a king by the tribes.

"I couldn't get on with that brute of a captain," he said, with savage reminiscences of seamen's brutality. "The other fellows were all right, but he was a brute. I had all I could do to keep my hands from him. But, when we got to the Cape, I could stand it no longer. I decamped. And to prevent arrest, I pushed into the country as far as I could. I don't think the fellow would

arrest me, if he could. But I ran no chances. I worked my way up through the interior; and, Jack, old fellow, 'tis hard work enough, I tell you. Then I got on to East London, and pushed into the interior again. I was often out of a job, because I had to tell the duffers I was a seaman, not a land-lubber; and they couldn't see what a knowledge of navigation could do for me up on the sands and veldts of Cape Colony. But I pushed on, sometimes hungry, sometimes in rags, but growing hardy and vigorous and athletic — ”

He stopped suddenly, as the terrible contrast with the withered and shrunken form beneath him in the hammock arrested his attention and created some compunction for his harmless boasting. But Jack, unheeding, said:

“Go on, Di! It is getting interesting!”

“Well at last I struck oil, though at first it was but a tiny well. I got appointed as manager in a store far up the country, away from cities and towns. The fellows that ran it were a lot of d——d sharpers; and, as they had only the poor natives to deal with, they shaved them right and left. They had a lot of old Brummagem stuffs sent out, not worth the carriage paid on them; but they sold, along with trinkets, penknives, mechanical dolls, Jews'-harps, to the poor natives, for what, do you think?”

Jack couldn't guess. He didn't know where the natives could get money. He at last struck on diamonds.

“Yes, you Solomon, you're right,” said Dion. “But though they had the diamonds, they dared not show them. You know it is dead against such law as we have out here; and they would shoot a native as they'd shoot a dog. But the poor fellows had almost the equivalent of diamonds in ostrich feathers and plumes, plucked sometimes from the living animal. These are of great value, as the Cape merchants know. And sometimes the natives brought in pieces of ivory, red as yonder sunset, for which the honest traders would fight like catamounts.”

"Well, somehow," Dion continued after a pause, "I had pity on the poor devils, seeing them so outrageously swindled; and by degrees I got them to understand that these feathers were worth ten times, twenty times, a hundred times the value the traders set on them. They were slow to understand; but, when they understood, they held on like grim death. And the poor devils were touchingly grateful. They wanted me to decamp and become their king; they promised me fifty wives and a tent full of ostrich plumes. They promised me everything. I say, Jack!"

"Well?" said Jack, who was deeply interested.

"You may say what you like about civilization and all that. But, by Jove, if ever there is to be a valley of Jehoshaphat, I'll take my chance with the black nigger and not with the white robber and plunderer."

"Well," he continued, "you know all this couldn't go on. The bosses were getting suspicious, although they still had *cent per cent* for their money. And I was beginning to think of looking out for another place, or making tracks for home, when one day I was caught in a thunderstorm, and I had to run for a Bushman's kraal. I was only in when down came deluge number two, to which old Noah's Deluge was but a sprinkling from a waterpot. I heard a whisper amongst the gins, with whom I was a prime favourite, because I gave them little bits of glass jewelry and little bells and such like childish things; and I heard them say: 'Tis the *Ba-as!*'"

"They were shy and frightened, poor devils, but I could see how glad they were to see me. And, after a time, they renewed their offer; and then, to tempt me further, they volunteered to show me some of their ostrich farms and where they found their ivories. I went; and the more I saw, the more I wondered. Of course, everything was primitive and savage; but, by Jove, if the white man could put his hungry eyes on what I saw, he would exterminate every black man in Africa. I went home next day, for the distance was great, to find a curt dis-

missal before me for being absent from duty. I wasn't sorry. I went back to the tribes."

Dion stopped, as if thinking. Then, he resumed:

"Jack, I'm no saint, God knows; but, on my mother's soul, I acted with the strictest honour with these poor devils. I suppose, like all men, I have that devil's hunger of money in my heart; but, if I were going to judgment now, I do not hold a fraction dishonestly or unlawfully obtained. I showed these poor fellows the strict money value of their goods; I made them reorganize on a newer system their ostrich-farms; I made them store up in secret places their treasures of ivory; and — I showed them, but they were mighty slow to believe it, that the bits of glass from Birmingham were useless, and that their own bits of polished stone were of great value. They wouldn't believe me; and they wanted me to take some of these stones, which would have made me a half-a-millionaire. I refused them."

"Dion," said Jack enthusiastically, "you were always a brick."

"Did I lose?" continued Dion. "Not a bit! I went to the Cape, negotiated with other feather merchants, feeling my way cautiously. I put these poor devils on to a good market; and they repaid me nobly. And then — the white devil got into their hearts; and now, they are becoming mere white men, cunning, avaricious, treacherous, under the yellow curse. But they are loyal to me! In a radius of two hundred miles from here I am master. I command their loyalty and their services. They would cheat and murder any other white man, if they were provoked by revenge or avarice. They would die for me. But I am not a rich man, thank God! I have this farm and these pretty things, which are valuable; and one thing more, which I shall show you!"

He went away; and, in the meantime, Annie came in to do some little service.

"I'm awfully sorry you weren't here, Annie," said

Jack, "to hear the history of Dion's adventures. I must get him to tell you all again."

"He appears to be a little king around here," said Annie. "The moment the natives understood you were his brother, they wanted to besiege us with kindness."

"Weren't we lucky, Annie?" he cried, his eyes glowing with pleasure, although the bones around the sockets were painfully visible. "Dion will be here in a moment; and he'll be delighted."

Dion was delighted. He came back with a little paper box in his hand, which he opened. Annie moved away.

"Come here, Annie," he said. "We have no secrets from you."

He held up the box, and took out a large diamond. It was a bluish-white stone, the two colours blending and alternating as if the light of them was a liquid. Jack took it to examine.

"I would be afraid to tell you what this will be worth, when cut by a lapidary. I must say it was forced on my acceptance by one of the chiefs for some service which I thought trifling, but which he thought important. I objected, and explained fully the value of the stone. It was pathetic to see the old chief shaking his head, as he said in his own dialect:

"'It is no use to me. I shall soon be with my fathers. It is no use to my tribe. The white man has come to stay. All will be his. Take it, while it is in my power to give. Some day, you will marry a white wife; and let it be her wedding portion.'"

Jack was turning it over in his thin frail hands, and holding it against the light. At Dion's last words he became very thoughtful, and poised the stone in his fingers.

"Dion!" he said, at length.

"Well, Jack?" said his brother.

"Dion!" said the dying boy, "what is nobly obtained, may be nobly bestowed."

"Certainly!" said Dion, astonished at his brother's solemnity.

"Then I shall make it our sister Annie's wedding portion," said the boy.

"If Annie will accept it as such," said Dion, looking at her questioningly.

And the tears welled into her eyes; but she did not say Nay!

CHAPTER XLIV

A FAREWELL SERMON

WHEN the old pastor turned back to his dining-room, after expelling forcibly the unfortunate man, who had intruded on his privacy to insult him, it may be said that the door closed on the most unhappy being on this planet. Full of disgust, self-shame, mortification, he threw himself into his arm-chair, and yielded himself tamely to the torrent of troubles that had suddenly rushed on him. The most acute of all his reflections was that he had been betrayed into an act of violence that degraded himself. He thought with all the poignancy of sorrow and shame of his niece's defection, of the estrangement of his parishioners, of his blindness and future desolation. But he cried out in the bitterness of his soul:

"I could have borne all, all; and conquered all. But to have locked my hand, my consecrated hand in the neck-cloth of a drunken peasant — oh!"

The following day, when Henry Liston came down, and told about the frightful murder of the preceding night, he was surprised at his pastor's indifference — still more surprised when the latter bade him take up his pen, and dictated to him the words in which he sent his resignation of the parish to his Bishop.

The following Sunday, he referred very briefly to the murder that had taken place. He spoke of it, as it reflected odium on the parish, and as the result of unbridled passion, or that thirst for revenge, which had come down to the people as an unhappy heirloom from their pagan ancestors. But he did not breathe a word about the unhappy man whose life was now in proxi-

mate danger on account of the crime. But when he had finished his allusions he did not turn in to resume the reading of the Mass; he remained for some time in the same posture, his fingers clasped in front of his vestments, and the dark glasses, looking quite black in the gloom, staring down at the congregation.

After some minutes, as if he were trying to conquer his emotion, he said:

"And now I am about to introduce to your notice another topic, more painful to me than that to which I have alluded, and probably quite as painful to you. Since I became pastor of this parish twenty-five years ago, I have never allowed any infringement, or breach, of the moral law to pass without due chastisement from this altar. I believed then, and I believe now, that there is no better way of checking vice than bringing public opinion to bear upon it; and thank God, so far at least, public opinion is on the side of God and Christian morality. What the near future may bring, God only knows. People tell me that things are changing, changing rapidly, changing terribly — that the old, deep, religious sense of the people is dying away; and that the law of God will not be revered in the future as in the past. However that may be," he said, raising his voice, and speaking with the old sternness and determination, "I shall never cease to uphold the high standard of morality in my parish that was handed down from my predecessors; and to-day, which marks my last appearance on this altar, I hereby denounce and stigmatize in the strongest manner the conduct of one who was closely connected with me by ties of flesh and blood, and whose departure from this parish took place under circumstances that have been the occasion of great scandal to the whole community. There may have been no sin in her action — nay, I'm sure there has been no sin. But we have to guard not only against sin, but against scandal; and those who are placed by education and otherwise above the crowd are bound

particularly to avoid everything that could be a rock of offence to their humbler and weaker brethren. I know, of course, the defence that has been made. I know it is said that my niece is a professional nurse, and bound to attend patients, high and low, rich and poor. I know also that her motives are the purest and holiest in sacrificing herself to accompany a dying boy to far-away Africa. But, whatever be thought of these arguments in medical circles, and whatever be the new-fangled principles that have come into being these last few years with what is called the progress of science and education, I have to consider the interests of my flock, which, at least as yet, has not abandoned the old Christian ideas of maiden modesty and prudence. Hence, I gave my niece the alternative of staying at home with me, or leaving me forever. I told her that the moment she left my parish under such circumstances she ceased to be my niece. She took her choice. And," he said fiercely, "I have cut her image out of my heart forever. She shall never darken my door again. She shall never sit at my table. She shall never hear my voice. God knows, it is true I did look forward to the time when she might be a help and a comfort to me in my old age and blindness. The strongest of us will cling to some support in our darkness and descent towards the grave; and I was hoping that in my darkness and sorrow, I would have some one near me to help me to spend the lonely and sorrowful hours of a blind old age. That is not to be. So God has permitted; so she has decided. But, as I have said, I cast her away from me forever. With the strangers she has cast her lot; and her lot shall be with the stranger forever. But when I am gone, let no man say, I spared my own flesh and blood, when the law of God and the welfare of the people required it."

Here again he paused; and there was the deepest silence in the church, except for the sobbing of the women, who swayed themselves to and fro, under the tragic solemnity of the scene, and who broke into a loud wailing,

when the priest's voice faltered as he said: "The strongest of us will cling to some support in our darkness and descent toward the grave." The men looked down, fingering their hats, but their faces were set and pale with emotion.

"And now," said the parish priest, in a softer voice, "I have to announce to you that I am no longer your pastor. I have sent in my resignation to your Bishop, and he has accepted it. I had hoped," he continued, not noticing the increased emotion of the people, "to remain your pastor to the end, because there is a certain human pride or vanity in dying with the honours of one's profession and in harness. But, an accident, locked up in my breast, that occurred this last week has precipitated matters, and next Sunday, the new parish priest of Doonvarragh, Lackagh, and Athboy will address you from this altar. Hence, my words to-day are my last words to you. For twenty-five years I have tried to serve God and you, imperfectly and feebly, I know, but yet, I think, with honesty and sincerity. I can say with St. Paul, that 'I did not covet your gold or silver.' Probably, you thought I was often exacting about dues; but it wasn't for myself, but because I believed it was a duty I had to discharge. To-day, if my debts were paid, I would not be worth one shilling. In other things, too, you thought me hard; but it was the hardness of the father that seeks the welfare of his child, and puts his eternal salvation before everything else. Hence, I know that I was neither loved nor liked in this parish —"

"You were, you were, yer reverence," cried a woman passionately sobbing, "but you didn't know the people. You kep' away from 'em; but they loved you in their heart of hearts."

"An' 'tis God Almighty's truth that the woman is afther spakin'," said a farmer, standing up, although his voice shook with the unusual experience of having spoken in a church.

A deep murmur of approbation and sympathy ran

through the congregation at these words. It was an inarticulate, but eloquent declaration of love and loyalty that a king might envy. It touched the strong man at the altar so keenly that his whole frame shook with emotion, and his trembling hand went fumbling beneath the chasuble for his handkerchief. And when he took out the old red handkerchief, and lifting up the black glasses, wiped those eyes where the light of Heaven would never shine again, a low, long wail of anguish rose up from the dense mass of people, and many a heart-felt and burning word in Irish reached the ears of the weeping priest.

It was fully five minutes before he could master his emotion, or subdue theirs. Then he said, hastily hiding his hands beneath his chasuble:

"There! There! I did not expect this. But what's done can't be undone now. But you have unmanned me; and I must now refrain from saying all that I wanted to say. But it was briefly this! I felt all along that I belonged to a past generation; and that all my thoughts and dreams were out of place now. I thought I belonged to the time when the people were tender and true, were kindly and honourable towards each other, and had a deep love in their hearts for God and Ireland. All my own love and hope and ambition were centred in these two words. To do God's work, however imperfectly, to serve Ireland, however unworthily, here was my ambition, here was my reward! Then I thought, perhaps unwisely, that the new generation which had arisen did not understand these things—that there was more selfishness, more cunning, more treachery in these days than in the days that are gone. But, somehow, little glimpses into the lives of the people, from time to time, made me suspect that perhaps I misunderstood them; and to-day, as I am leaving you, I most humbly ask your pardon, and that of Almighty God, if I have formed a wrong judgment about you. But all that is gone. And in saying Farewell! to you, believe me that I carry with me a

consolation that I never expected to possess, and that will be a staff and support to my tottering feet in the way I have yet to tread. And all that I will ask of you in return is, to forget, as far as you can, my own failings whilst I was here, and to be merciful to my memory when I'm dead!"

The acute agony of the people had died away; but there was a deep murmur of prayer and praise, when the priest turned around, and felt his way to the end of the altar.

When he came forth from the sacristy after his Thanksgiving, the whole congregation were on their knees before him; and the acolyte, who held his hand and led him, had to pick his way through a narrow avenue to the gate. The old priest knew by the instinct of the blind that he was passing through a crowd; and he made the Sign of the Cross over them as he went. But he hardly recognized the dimensions of the multitude, until he reached the gate, and heard the noise of the people standing up, and the tumult of exclamation that followed him as he passed down the road to where his horse was standing. Just as he was mounting his car, he felt his coat-tails plucked gently; and, stooping down, he caught the tiny hand of a little child.

"Father," said she, in her childish way, "won't you come back any more?"

"Who is this?" he said. "Whom have I got here?"

"I'm Eileen Hogan — 'Chatterbox,' you know!"

It was one of his school favourites, whom he had christened with that name.

He gently stroked the fair hair of the child, and passed his hand over her soft cheek.

"No! Eily," he said. "But maybe you'll come to see me. Good-bye! and be a good girl!"

He mounted his car and drove away.

Mrs. Duggan was not in the habit of going to first Mass to Doonvarragh. She found it easier to attend the

ten o'clock Mass at Athboy, which was equidistant from her house. She was not present, therefore, at the scene just described, which took place in Doonvarragh chapel; but she heard of it, and in the newly-found enthusiasm of the people, it lost nothing in the recital. And, amidst her own profound sorrow and shame, she could not help feeling a little pride in her own loyalty to her pastor, and the way in which her opinions had now been vindicated.

"Many and many a time I tould ye, ye were wrong — out an' out; but ye wouldn't listen to me. Wid yere ejucation, an' yere dress, an' yere style, ye think ye know more than Almighty God Himself, Glory be to His Holy Name! But, whin the throuble comes, thin ye opens yere eyes, or rather they're opened for ye! Oh, *mavrone!* if that poor bhoy had only been said and led by his prieshts, he'd have a different shtory to tell to-day. But, sure, no wan, from the beginnin' of the wurruld till now ever knew luck nor grace attindin' anywan, that wint agin their prieshts."

There was no reply. There never was a reply to any outburst of honest eloquence on the part of the Irish *vanithees*. They did not reason, nor argue, nor debate. They *decreed*. And there was no appeal.

Suddenly, a new idea flashed across the mind of the brave old woman. They had told her that her parish priest was going away. Perhaps, she would never see him again, never have the chance of telling how faithful and loyal she was amidst all changes and vicissitudes. She instantly gave orders to have the horse and cart brought out again, demanded a new cap, freshly-quilted and frilled, and put on the great cloth cloak with the satin hood, which was the ornament and glory of Irish womanhood, and which not only lasted a lifetime, but was often passed down from generation to generation. Thus attired, she drove down to the parish priest's house with one of her boys, and entered the presbytery grounds.

The old priest, in his cassock, was walking up and down

in the sunshine, along the gravelled path that lay along the southern walls of his house. He was thinking of many things, pondering many things in his old, syllogistic fashion, wondering, most of all, whether he had not been labouring all his life under the mistake that Law is the finality of Being, and that he had never discerned that there may be something higher than Law, or a Law beyond Law, and that is Love! He had never seemed to doubt before that rigid, inexorable Law was the governing Power of the Universe; and that it was only mute and unquestioning obedience to its behests that saved the Universe and the souls of men from irreparable ruin.

He would as soon have doubted the conclusions of a proposition in Euclid, or a formal syllogism, as this. It was his Faith — the cardinal principle of his life; and he had always prided himself on the strict and unexceptional manner in which he had acted on the principle. It was the bulwark of the Church and State and people. Remove that, or tamper with it, and down comes everything in hopeless and irretrievable ruin. But now something higher than mere reason told him that throughout the vast universe there was a something higher and holier than Law — or rather that the highest of all laws — the Supreme Excellence was Love. That murmur amongst the people at Mass; that bold expression of unlettered peasants, when they told him he was utterly mistaken; and his own tears — were the eloquent defenders of the sublime thesis that "Love is Creation's Final Law." And then, by a logical, but painful transition, he suddenly asked himself — After all, was Annie right? Was her act of self-immolation, too, although it seemed to him to transgress the laws of propriety, still in perfect consonance with the higher decrees which, in the name of humanity, had been confirmed and consecrated by common consent?

It was whilst he was thus agitated, that he heard the sound of the heavy cart-wheels crunching the gravel

before the door, and his old housekeeper immediately after announcing to him that Mrs. Duggan was waiting to see him.

She hadn't seen her parish priest for some months; and she was much shocked at the alteration in his appearance, and deeply touched when she saw him groping his way in utter darkness.

"Wisha, yer reverence," she said, "you will forgive me callin' on you in yer throuble; but sure I hard all about your sermon this mornin' — and are you goin' to lave us?"

"Sit down, Mrs. Duggan," he said, extending his hand blindly to her, "it is good of you to come and see me; and you having such a weight of trouble on yourself."

"Well, sure, welcome be the will of God," she said. "It is a sore, hard thrial enough for me in me old age. But sure, nothin' betther could come from the dhrinkin' and the fightin' an' the card-playin'. An' all that was bad enough, if he hadn't turned agin his prieshts."

The priest said nothing; but waited.

"An' is it thrue, yer reverence, that you're goin' away from us?"

"'Tis, Mrs. Duggan," he said. "You see I am old and now I'm run blind; and 'tis a big parish, and I wouldn't feel easy in my conscience to keep it, when I couldn't do all that I ought to do for the people."

"Wisha, thin, yer reverence will forgive me for sayin' it; but the people wor sayin' couldn't his reverence get another curate, and resht himself?"

"I'm afraid not," he said. "The parish is large, but the population is much lessened by emigration. The place wouldn't support three priests."

"But sure the people, yer reverence, av you only axed them, or put up your finger, 'ud incrase their jues, and give all you want."

He shook his head mournfully. He was afraid to deny it now, because it would take away the beautiful impres-

sions left on his memory since the morning. But it was too late.

"It is too late now to think of it," he said. "Tell me about your own trouble."

"There isn't much to tell, yer reverence," she replied. "We have done all in our power for this misfortunate bhoy; but I'm afraid 'tis no use. Everythin' is agin him; and he'll give no help himself."

"Why doesn't he tell his solicitor all he knows," said the priest, "and why doesn't he protest his innocence?"

"Maybe he can't," said the poor mother, lifting up her hands and letting them fall in her lap. "Maybe he can't; and he knows 'tis no use!"

"He was remanded last Thursday?" said the priest. "Was he not?"

"He was, yer reverence, and taken up to Cork Gaol; an' he'll be brought down nixt Thursday with the handcuffs on him, and the whole wurruld lookin' at him."

The thought of her boy handcuffed as a spectacle to the world was too much for her, and she broke into a fit of weeping.

He let her alone, until she calmed herself, and again asked:

"Will there be any new, any additional evidence against him, do you think?"

"Wisha, we don't know, yer reverence," she replied. "I'm tould the police are scourin' the counthry right an' left, and axin' all kinds of questions about the poor bhoy. An' there he is, not a word out of him. He won't say Iss, Aye, or No, to any question he's axed. All he'll say is, 'I'll be hanged, an' I deserved it.'"

"That's very bad," said the priest, thoughtfully. "He is sinking into despair. Is there anything new discovered?"

"Nothin', as I tould yer reverence. But they say the police wor down at the ould castle all day on Saturday. And there's no knowing what these haythens may swear, if they are paid for it."

"Many and many a time I warned the people against

the gypsies," he said in his old tone of complaint; but he suddenly stopped. Complaints and recriminations were no more for him.

"Thru for your reverence," said the old woman, catching the word. "But the people had their own way; and much good has it done them."

After another long pause, he said:

"I suppose he'll be committed now to the summer assizes. Or, they may remand him again and again. But I wish the boy would break silence. It would help to establish his innocence."

"And maybe your reverence thinks that he is innocent — that he never done the deed?" she cried, with awakened hope.

"Do you mean Dick?" he said.

"Av coorse, I do, yer reverence. 'Tis of Dick I'm talkin'."

"Dick no more murdered Ned Kerins than I did," said the priest. "*And God will prove his innocence to the world, as you'll see.*"

"Oh thin, may the Almighty God power his blessings down on you every day you live," said the poor woman, from whose heart a mighty load was now lifted. "Sure I don't care what happens now, so long as he hasn't the sin of murder on his sowl. Let 'em hang and quarter him if they likes. Sure many an innocent man was hanged in Ireland before. So long as I know that he didn't sind that misfortunate man to judgment with his sin on his sowl."

"But," said the priest solemnly, not heeding her words, "you mustn't breathe to man or mortal what I've said to you. The officers of the law are clever; and they would block every effort on your son's behalf if they knew them. So you must promise me now that what has happened here this afternoon will be as secret as the grave."

"You may depind on me, yer reverence," she said.

"The life of your son depends on your silence," he repeated.

"Oh thin, oh thin, oh thin," she cried, kissing the priest's hand in an ecstasy of gratitude, "may the Lord forgive him and thim who didn't know what kind of priesht they had, till they lost him."

"Mind," he said, "I didn't say that I, but God would save your son. And remember, God is only moved by prayer; and above all, by a mother's prayers."

CHAPTER XLV

THE MOONLIGHT SHROUD

WHEN Annie O'Farrell came out from the sick-chamber after the strange scene with the two brothers, she felt that the great hour of her life had come, and that all her own happiness, as well as that of others, depended on her choice. She was quite aware all along that she was not indifferent to the brave young fellow, who had often amused her by his quaintness and candour in the days of their tuition; and she also felt that she could no longer look upon him as in his pupillage, but as one who commanded respect and affection from an innate nobility of character, which had been developed under strange and untoward circumstances. The sense of dependence on her, too, which both young men manifested, seemed to give them claims which easily developed into the highest that a girl can give or have; and hence, the transition was so easy from protection to affection, from respect to love, that when the final proposal was made so simply, so delicately, so honourably, she could not help feeling gratified and pleased at this last and highest mark of respect that the young can pay to each other. But then — a fatal obstacle to her union with Dion rose up darkly and threateningly before her. She was a Catholic; and he — ? She had made great sacrifices for these boys; but this she could not make. She had trampled on human opinion without scruple; but this was something more.

It was in such perplexity Dion found her some time after their interview in his brother's sick-chamber. She was standing near one of the fountains, looking into it

with a mind preoccupied with doubt. She did not hear Dion approach on the thick grass. It was his shadow cast across the water that trembled in the fountain she first saw. She started and turned, and a faint blush covered her face.

"You forgot this, Annie," said the young man, holding out the little box in which the diamond lay. "It is yours!"

"Dion," said she, "I can't take it. Indeed, I can't!"

"Why, what's the matter, Annie?" he said, in surprise, "I gave it to you. Have Jack and I been blundering badly?"

"No! no!" she said hastily. "You meant everything that was kind. But I fear, Dion, this is a thing that cannot be."

"Well, all that depends on yourself, Annie," he said, in a manly way. "I suppose we could have done things more delicately. I see now we were abrupt. But Jack had set his heart on this matter; and you must have known, Annie, what my feelings were this long time."

Annie hung down her head. She felt somehow that it was from herself the apology was due.

"I can see," Dion went on, "that there was a certain indelicacy in forcing the subject on you, because, I suppose, you feel a certain want of protection away so far from home and friends. But, somehow, you know, Annie, you had become one of ourselves —"

"Dion, don't!" said Annie, crying. "You and Jack have been everything that was kind and good; but where is the use? Let me put it plainly to you. I am a Roman Catholic, and I cannot marry anyone outside my own faith."

"But I am of your faith," said Dion. "You are my religion, because you represent all that is good and noble and honourable; and I don't want any religion but that."

"If I am all that you think I am," she said gravely, "it is because of my religion."

"Well, then," he said, "your religion is mine. Look

here, Annie. When I came up from civilization, from town and cities, I had little faith in God or man left in my heart. But, when I began to understand these poor savages here around, whatever little faith I had revived. Because I said to myself, 'Look now at these poor fellows! They have no education, no books, no schools; and yet they have a code of morals and honour that equals those of advanced peoples; and what is more, they act on it. They are honest, sober, self-denying, abstemious, chaste, obedient. Surely,' I said, 'there must be some Being who implanted such virtues in their hearts.' And the savage taught me to see God. Then you came and I saw something more. No, Annie, I am far from being an irreligious man. All that is holy, all that is pure, all that is noble, in the world, I worship in you. That's my religion! And if there be anything more required, you shall be my priestess; and your people shall be my people, and your God, my God!"

"You are a good man, Dion," she said. "But I want you to know that behind me is Truth. Can you accept the Truth, when it is shown to you?"

"Certainly," he said. "And now, Annie, there's no time to lose. I know it would make Jack happier if he knew — if he saw us married before he closes his eyes in death. Shall I tell him all?"

"Yes!" she said. "I should like to make poor Jack happy."

"Then," said Dion, "I'll lose no time. I know where there's a *Padre*, a good old Irishman, too! He is a hundred miles off; but one of my men can have him here in two or three days. You tell him everything, and just say, that I and Jack are in your hands, and let him square up everything at once. You know I'm no great hand at praying and all that kind of thing. But you'll do it all for me — won't you, Annie?"

And Annie had to smile at the simplicity of this big boy — who was just as buoyant and candid as he was when many years ago she cuffed him at his Latin lessons.

The evening of their marriage, they sat out on the veranda in front of the house, watching the play of the fountains on the still warm air—the long thread of water that shot from the pipes beneath, and then seemed to foliate itself in many-tinted leaves, which fell, drop by drop, or petal by petal, into the foaming basin beneath. The air was light and buoyant, yet filled with a thousand fragrant odours from flower and bush and shrub; and there was an exquisite stillness all around, unbroken by cry of bird or shriek of beast. There was no sound but the tinkling of the drops of crystal that fell, like musical bells, on the silence all around.

Jack Wycherly, shriven and anointed, lay in his hammock near the ground; Dion and Annie sat near him; and the Padre was at the other side, joining now and again in the general conversation. Although the occasion was a festive one, there was an air of sadness and subdued melancholy over the group, because they felt that the frail life in their midst was ebbing slowly away, and the shadow of death was upon them. Yet, not one of them could say that he was unhappy, least of all the poor lad, whose very consciousness of the near approach of death seemed to place him beyond human sorrow, and to lift him into new spaces of more spiritual and ethereal being.

The festivities of the day were over, as they thought. Everything that could be done for the natives in Dion's employment, and in the immediate vicinity, to make the day remarkable, and one to be placed forever in their memory, had been effected by the noiseless benevolence of their master; and they had scattered to their rooms in the vicinity, or down to their kraals near the river, glutted with the happiness of children, who never care to see beyond the present.

The sun had set in a cloudless sky, and the big moon came up from behind the valley; and the four figures on the veranda never stirred. Two were drinking in the perfect happiness of their union, and whispering to

each other the nameless nothings that are interesting to them and to no one else besides; one was buried in his own thoughts — of his far-off country, of his solitude, of his work. And one was quite still, counting his heart-beats and measuring his breathing, and gazing with greater love than a brother's on the happiness he had been the unconscious instrument of creating.

Whilst all was perfectly still and lovely, there seemed to start suddenly from the ground a group of native men and women, who approached gently and with an air of apology in their movements, and formed themselves into a dusky circle around the group on the veranda. Then, one beat gently and slowly with his fingers a flat drum that he held; and, in a florid recitation, he told of the grandeur and the greatness of their master. When he had done, another arose, stepped forward from the throng, and in a similar recitative recounted the many favours the black man had received from their white brother — the little gifts, the wise advice, the guardianship and protection he had always extended to them. Then, a young girl, the fairest of their tribe, stepped forward, clothed in white to her ankles; and bringing in her arms a basket such as is woven by the natives out of pampas-grass and reeds, she knelt down, and, kissing Annie's feet with a gesture of absolute humility and subjection, she placed the basket, full of the richest flowers, in Annie's lap. She raised herself, and made a profound inclination to the young "white queen," when Annie, touched by all this affection and love on the part of the poor natives, stood up, and throwing her arms around the girl's neck, she kissed her on both cheeks. The native curtsied again, and went back beaming with happiness to her people, who were wild with joy at the honour paid one of their tribe.

"Annie," said Jack, who was watching the whole proceeding with great interest, and who now took his sister's hand in his own, "that was beautiful. It was so like you. Do you know that I feel very happy now?

In fact, I do not think I was ever so happy in my whole life. I feel quite light, as if I were going to fly. Wasn't it lucky, Annie, for us all that we got away from that murky, misty country and came here to find Dion and — such a scene as this? Oh, yes! I'm awfully happy. I never thought I could be so happy before. But, hist! the natives are singing."

The whole tribe were singing in a low tone, like the murmur of a far-off sea. They were singing again the praises of their chief and the white queen. They were telling how she came amongst them, as the moon comes out of a cloud by night to enlighten them and throw the cold, pure rays of unselfish love into their kraals and cabins. They told how she nursed their babes and their sick; how she had no dread of fevers, or diphtheria, and how the dreaded pneumonia, caused by the sand-storms of their hills, fled at her approach. They told how she even nursed the lepers, and refused to accept their warnings of the dread disease; and every strophe ended with a Hail! or Hallelujah! to the great white queen, who was sent across the seas by the Spirit-Ruler of the universe to lift the black man from death and the deep pit.

The low, murmured monotone, accompanied by the sound of the falling waters, seemed to lull the listeners in the veranda into a kind of half-wakeful sleep. The priest was the first to rise; and, casting a careless glance at the hammock where Jack was lying, he started and looked closer. Then, he went over, and whispered something to Dion; and all gathered around the hammock.

Yes! There was no mistaking the peace that slept on the brow of the boy — a peace, unlike that of happiness, or sleep, or anything else that is holy and gentle in the living. It is the peace that cannot be lifted or broken or banished for evermore, by sigh or pain, or tear, or aught else that wrings the soul, and contorts the features of the living. Jack Wycherly was dead! dead in his hammock on the dark veranda with its wreaths of fra-

grant creepers down there in the South-African Valley. But in some way, the golden moon had come round in its circuit, and evading the trellised creepers and the pillars, it flooded with light the whole length of the hammock where the dead boy lay, and wrapped him in its own silver shroud of pure white beams from the depths of the African skies. His eyes were still wide open, and seemed to be gazing afar like the sightless eyes of a poet or a seer; and his lips were parted, as if they were still uttering the benediction on his beloved sister, that was his loving valedictory and farewell to life. One dead hand fell over the side of his hammock and trailed along the floor of the veranda; and the other lay dead across the heart that was now stilled forever. But the moon shone steadily on the white figure, and seemed reluctant to remove her pearly shroud of pure, white light from the couch of the dead boy.

"Annie, Jack is dead!" said Dion, after he had bent down and scrutinized the still face. And then he went away, sobbing piteously.

After a time, Annie beckoned to the chiefs of the natives to come nearer; and when she had shown them the dead boy, she bade them dismiss to their homes all the tribe, except the immediate servants of the household. These latter gathered into the veranda, a silent and reverential group, awaiting orders, and looking on with frightened faces, as if the sight of a white man dead had some nameless terror for them. The others glided silently away into the shadows created by the moonlight; but all night long, the sound of wailing, like the Celtic *caoine*, came up from the valley, and filled the night with melancholy music; and the howl of the jackal and the jaguar came mournfully across the veldt, a weird accompaniment to human mourning.

A few days later, the skeleton of the boy, with his chest empty of life-breathing lungs, was deposited deep in the sand and loam in a retired spot of the garden, which his brother had reclaimed from Nature. Still

later, a stately marble mausoleum was erected over the grave; and still later, Dion, about to bid farewell forever to African skies and plains, gathered around the place a picked troop of native chieftains, and solemnly entrusted that grave and the sacred dust it contained to their keeping. He knew well the trust would be kept; for his last words to the good Padre, when he was leaving, were:

“Father, by all means, make Christians of these poor heathens; but, for God’s sake, *don’t civilize them.*”

CHAPTER XLVI

THE TRIAL

DICK DUGGAN had been formally committed for trial; and it came off at the summer assizes at Cork in that year. It was not a sensational case. No element of romance entered into it. It was simply a trial for a very vulgar murder, wrought through hate and revenge. But, as the case had an agrarian aspect, the Crown attached some importance to it; and the Solicitor-General was sent down from Dublin to prosecute. The court was crowded, although the one element that could excite public curiosity was absent. There appeared to be no doubt about the prisoner's guilt; and therefore, there was no room for forensic displays. There was a foregone conclusion as to the prisoner's conviction. Nevertheless, as no loophole of escape can be left on such occasions, but every web must be tightened around the doomed man, the Solicitor-General made a most elaborate opening statement, showing that from the beginning that deadly hate, which was the final cause of the dread tragedy, was not only entertained, but publicly avowed by the prisoner. The first element, therefore, of conviction, the establishment of a motive, was evident. Disappointment about the land, rage and hatred at seeing the girl, whom he hoped to make his wife, espoused to his enemy, the public shame of defeat — all these combined to offer the jury every assurance of cogent motive for the dreadful crime. And, as if this were not enough, the learned counsel guaranteed to put before the jury evidence that the prisoner, again and again, publicly avowed his determination

to be revenged on his supposed enemy in the one way that such natures seek revenge — that is, by the commission of wilful and deliberate murder.

The wretched prisoner stood in the dock with bowed head. Streaks of gray showed themselves in his black hair, signs of the terrible conflict he had waged with himself down there in the narrow cell where he had been confined. He never looked up at judge or jury, but with head bent down he seemed the very embodiment of despair, or sullen hate. With the greatest difficulty, his solicitor coerced him to plead: *Not guilty!* His own wish was to say *Guilty*, and to be hanged without delay. The court was crowded with witnesses and police. The aged mother sat back amongst the audience — the only person in that assembly, who felt no fear, nor pity, because she had perfect faith in God and in His priest.

The first witness called was the Sergeant of Police. He testified that he received information of the murder about seven o'clock on the evening of February 7. His informant was a servant of Dr. Wycherly's. He proceeded at once to the place which was about two miles from the town of M——. There in a recess in the road, the cob or pony was still quietly grazing. The form of a man lay down over the dashboard, his head almost touching the animal. He raised him up, and saw at once that he was dead. There was a blot of blood on his coat. The pike, one prong stained with blood, lay at the bottom of the cart. He at once with the aid of the constable arranged the dead body in the cart, and drove back to town, where the body was deposited at the barracks. From information received, he proceeded at once to take out a warrant for the arrest of Dick Duggan.

Cross-examined, he testified that the time in which he got notice of the murder could not have been earlier than seven o'clock; and that he was at the scene of the murder at half-past seven o'clock.

Further cross-examined, he declined to give the name

of his informant; but it was a well-known fact that there was deep hostility —

But here he was peremptorily called to order by counsel for defence, who was supported by the presiding judge.

Again, examined by the Solicitor-General, he testified that he had proceeded with the warrant to Duggan's house; but having ascertained that he was absent all the evening, he and his men hid themselves in the cow-house, and waited till Duggan arrived.

"At what hour did he arrive?"

"At half-past ten."

"Did he go straight to his house?"

"No, he came into the barn."

"What did he do there?"

"He commenced washing away streaks of blood from his face and hands, in a huge boiler or cauldron of water that was there."

"And then?"

"Then I arrested him for wilful murder, and had him handcuffed."

"Did he resist?"

"No, he submitted quietly."

"Did you warn him?"

"Yes, I warned him that every word he uttered might be used in evidence against him."

"Did he make any remark then?"

"Yes! His first remark was: 'My God! did I kill him?' He then said: 'I suppose I'll swing for it; but I deserve it.' He wanted to go in and see his mother; but this wasn't allowed."

Dr. Dalton was called and testified that he saw the deceased in the police office. He had the body stripped. There was a slight accumulation of blood on the inner and outer garments of the dead man. On washing the surface of the body he discovered a wound over the heart, such as would be made by a very sharp keen instrument. He then, aided by another surgeon, Dr. Willis, opened the body and traced the wound through the left ventricle

of the heart, severing many vessels, and terminating in the apex, or first lobe of the lung behind. Death must have been instantaneous.

The pike was produced, still blood-stained. Yes, that pike was an instrument that would cause such a wound.

Dr. Willis, called, corroborated the testimony of Dr. Dalton. There could be no doubt as to the cause of death.

Cross-examined, he admitted that it was perfectly possible the sad tragedy might have been the result of an accident. Such accidents are extremely common; and if the deceased had had a pike with him in the trap, and if that pike had been placed carelessly, with the points upwards, it is quite possible that the deceased, if thrown forward by a sudden lurch, might have fallen on the prongs of the pike, and met his death. The wound was lateral and upward. Examined by the Solicitor-General, as to whether the deceased, if he had sustained such an accident, could deliberately withdraw the weapon from his side, and place it in the bottom of the trap, witness declared such a thing impossible, as death must have been instantaneous.

Pete, the gypsy, on being sworn testified that he had heard the prisoner say in his own and Mr. Edward Wycherly's presence, "By the Lord God, I'll make such an example of Kerins and all belonging to him, and all that has anything to say or do with him, that it will be remembered in the parish, as long as the old castle stands." Mr. Wycherly said: "Take care, Duggan, he carries his six-shooter always about with him; and a bullet goes faster than a shillelagh." Duggan replied: "And there's something that goes faster than a bullet, *and it makes no noise.*" On another occasion, somewhere about the New Year, he heard Duggan say, in allusion to Kerins's marriage: "If I thought that Martha Sullivan would have him, I'd think no more of blowing out his brains than shooting a dog." And on another occasion he, the prisoner, asked witness: "Couldn't the ould woman give

the girl something to drab, that is, to poison her?" And he replied: "We have a bad name enough, but we've always kept our hands from blood."

Cross-examined, Pete admitted that the gypsies had a bad name in the parish; but it was not justified. He was a hard-working tradesman, a tinker if you like; but his mother told fortunes, and the people were afraid of her.

Cora, the gypsy girl, came on the table with the same self-assurance that always characterized her. She tossed back her black gypsy locks, and sitting down, she placed her elbow on her knee, and supported her head on her hand in the old attitude. She testified that on the 29th day of January she was present at the festivities in Kerins's house; that in the course of the evening she was called out of the kitchen by Mrs. Kerins, and bade to go over to Duggan's and tell Dick that she wished to see him in the screen of firs behind the house; that she went to Duggan's, beckoned Dick from the kitchen, and in the yard told him the message Mrs. Kerins had sent; that she hid herself in the screen; and heard the conversation between Dick Duggan and Mrs. Kerins; that the latter begged and implored him to let bygones be bygones; that he replied, "Take this from me, that neither here nor hereafter will I forgive the man that wronged me and mine." Mrs. Kerins said: "The black hatred is in your heart, and all for nothing." He replied: "How can I forgive the man that first took away from me the place I wanted to bring you; and then took you from me in the bargain? I'll not lie to you nor God. I've an account to settle with Kerins; and when it is settled, there will be no arrears."

Cross-examined, Cora said that she beckoned Dick from the kitchen by pulling his sleeve. When the counsel for the prisoner asked her whether she was not unutterably mean to play the spy in the screen, she coolly answered: "It was her business to know everything"; and

then she added: "You have just reminded me that Duggan, before he left the kitchen, said in answer to some question about the jollification going on at Crossfields: 'I guess their *ceol* [Music] will be changed into keening soon enough.'"

The counsel asked no further questions.

Then came one of the sensations of the trial. The gypsy girl, on being ordered to go down from the witness-table, said solemnly, "I have sworn the truth. But *it wasn't Dicky Duggan that murdered Kerins.*"

She was instantly ordered back, examined and cross-examined; but she gave no information, beyond repeating her assertion: "Dicky Duggan is a bad fellow enough; but he never murdered Kerins."

Dan Goggin, a sturdy farmer, testified that he was in the public-house at the Cross the day of the murder. He was returning from the fair at M——. A lot of farmers were drinking and chaffing Dick Duggan, who had taken drink but wasn't drunk. He heard Duggan saying: "There may be another dance at Crossfields soon; and the feet won't touch the ground either." He also spoke of a *Banshee* and a *Caoine*.

The bar-girl at the public-house testified that Duggan had come to the house the day before the murder, had remained there talking and drinking all day. He had several times uttered terrible threats against Kerins and his family. He was too drunk to go home that night; and he slept at the public-house. Next day, he drank again, but not much. The farmers coming home from the fair at M—— were chaffing him about the dance at Kerins's. He again grew furious and threatening, and demanded more drink. This she refused, and bade him go home. At length, he demanded whiskey peremptorily, saying: "Give it to me. I have work to do to-night!" He then left the house.

Cross-examined, the girl said, it could not have been earlier than half-past six when Duggan left the house, because she had heard the Angelus-bell ring some time

before. Questioned as to where he went, she declared she had no idea. A second question as to what was her interpretation of Duggan's words: "I have work to do to-night!" was peremptorily challenged by counsel for defence, and the challenge was allowed.

The Sergeant of Police, recalled, gave evidence that Duggan said something about the parish priest on his way to prison; but seemed to think it a matter of no consequence that Kerins was killed.

Finally, as if to clinch the case against the unfortunate prisoner, the sergeant swore that in the early dawn of the morning following the murder, he had taken the pike to Duggan's house, when it was too dusk to notice the blood-stains on the prong; and that old Duggan had admitted that the pike was their property; and that he had seen it last in Dick's hands the morning of the day previous to the murder, when Dick had been cutting soil from a rick of hay near the road.

And thus a terrible chain of circumstantial evidence had been drawn around the unhappy criminal, for whom there seemed no loophole of escape. The statement of Cora, the gypsy girl, affected the sympathies of the audience; but had no effect on the legal progress of the case.

The counsel for defence called no witnesses. He had none to call. The case against the prisoner was overwhelming; and the prisoner positively refused to give the least assistance towards establishing his innocence. His solicitor begged, prayed, implored him to say where he had spent the evening, or to give some evidence that would establish an *alibi*; or even to declare his innocence. No! He maintained a stubborn and sullen silence; and neither the appeals of his lawyer nor the tearful expositions of his friends had any effect upon him. It was quite clear to lawyer and counsel, to warder and jailor, that Dicky Duggan would die a felon's death.

Half-ashamed of the wretched defence he had to make, knowing its inutility, and conscious of its hollowness, the senior barrister arose, and after a few words, he rested

the entire case for the defence on the evidence of the barmaid, and the untrustworthiness of the witnesses. He seemed to score a point by showing how utterly impossible it was for the prisoner to reach the scene of the murder, which it was averred had taken place before seven o'clock that night, for the barmaid had sworn that he could not have left the public-house before half-past six; and there were four miles at least between the public-house and the scene of the murder. He then raked up in that strong, vituperative manner which characterizes the Bar, the history and antecedents of the gypsies; proved that they were utterly disreputable; and volunteered to show that they had been expelled from Duggan's house again and again for rude language or conduct, and that they had a bias against the family. Finally, he developed the sergeant's evidence, and proved that the words used by Duggan when arrested, manifestly showed his innocence of the crime. He wound up his address by warning the jury of the dangers of entertaining merely circumstantial evidence; and hinted broadly that it was a matter of public notoriety that judicial murders had been committed on exactly such evidence as was now submitted to the jury.

The barmaid, recalled again, swore that Duggan could not have left the house before half-past six o'clock that evening, because the Angelus-bell had rung out a considerable time before he had departed.

The learned judge asked rather demurely what was the Angelus-bell to which reference had been made so often during the trial.

The counsel for defence, who was a Roman Catholic, explained that it was a continuation amongst a conservative people, and one tenacious of tradition, of the old curfew-bell, of which his Lordship had read.

"And at what hour does the curfew-bell ring?" asked the judge. "Does it not change with the seasons?"

But someone had mercifully passed on a slip of paper to counsel, who now declared with evident consciousness of superior intelligence:

"No! my Lord!" he said. "In *this* country, it is always rung at six o'clock in the evening!"

The sergeant, recalled, stated that the gypsies were utterly disreputable characters; and that charges of stealing fowl, fortune-telling, and other such nefarious practices were often alleged against them.

"Alleged?" said the Solicitor-General. "Were they ever proved, sergeant?"

And the sergeant shook his head mournfully. He had never secured a conviction against them.

He was again interrogated about the prisoner's language when he was arrested; and he admitted that the prisoner seemed surprised that it was Kerins, and not the parish priest, who had been killed.

Again interrogated, he said he had taken measurements of the distance between the public-house and the scene of the murder; and found the distance to be three miles, seven furlongs, three yards, and two feet.

"Could the prisoner have possibly reached on foot the scene of the murder, if he had not left the public-house before half-past six?"

"No!" said the sergeant. "That is, if the murder was actually committed in the spot where we found the dead man."

At which remark, the Solicitor-General smiled.

The prisoner's father testified that the gypsies were regarded as dishonest and disreputable characters in the parish; and Pete and his daughter had been driven by the old woman from the house for improper language from time to time.

"Do you believe," asked the junior counsel for prosecution, "that they cherished any particular animosity against your family, so that they would swear falsely against the prisoner?"

And the old man had to answer, "No."

"One more question," said counsel. "I did not intend to ask you to give evidence against your son; but as the opposing counsel, my learned friend opposite, has put

you in the chair, perhaps you would answer. Is that pike," pointing to the weapon lying on the table, the one prong still rusty from its ghastly work, "your property?"

"It is," said the old man.

"In whose hands did you last see it?"

"In my son's!" was the reply.

The old man turned around and paused for a few seconds, looking wistfully at his son. Then, brushing aside a tear, he descended the steps.

This closed the evidence; and the junior counsel for defence rose up, and pulled his gown over his shoulders. He was a young man, and therefore eloquent; and as he drew on the vast resources of his oratory, a smile rippled over the faces of the older and more prosaic men. He addressed himself to one point only—the danger of convicting on circumstantial evidence, and the awful responsibility entailed on the consciences of the jurors by reason of the fact that only circumstantial evidence had been adduced in support of the case. He insisted strongly that there was some grave mystery hidden behind the apparent certainties that had been brought under their notice; and he quoted the saying of Cora, the gypsy girl, and her evident conviction, that notwithstanding her own evidence the prisoner was innocent of the crime. He tried to torture the minds of the jurors by the suggestion that if they sent the prisoner to the gallows, the time would come, when, under the light of fresh revelations, they would look back with remorse and horror on the terrible miscarriage of justice that would be perpetrated that day, if they brought in a verdict of "Guilty!"

Then the Solicitor-General arose, and in a few words tore into tatters the little web of oratory which his "very young but learned friend" had spun before their eyes. And with a brevity that was more alarming, because more assured than the lengthiest speech, he marshalled facts and motives, so as to leave no room whatever on

the mind of the vast audience that filled the courthouse, of Dick Duggan's guilt.

The jurors, who shuffled uneasily under the infliction of the speech for the defence, looked relieved at the brevity of the prosecuting counsel's address. Their minds were evidently made up. They seemed to wait impatiently for the judge's final charge.

CHAPTER XLVII

AN APPARITION

DURING the terrible tragedy, the old woman sat back amongst the benches behind the dock. Her face was nearly covered by the hood of the black cloak that she had worn since her marriage. Her white cap, frilled and ironed, shone beneath it; but her face was shrouded as if with the shame and pain of the ordeal through which she was passing. She was rolling her beads through her fingers during the trial; and seemed, in her communion with God, to be oblivious of all around her. But when the final crisis was approaching, she raised her head, and looked ever and again anxiously toward the door of the court. But her heart fell, when the crowd seemed to thicken, as the trial progressed, and no messenger from God appeared to rekindle her hopes, or reassure her faith. Yet these hopes smouldered on, until the final appeal, absolute and convincing, was made; and the judge, with all the solemnity of his high office increased by the gravity of the case, proceeded to recapitulate and sift the evidence before him.

He commenced at once by laying down the law about circumstantial evidence, endorsing the remarks of the prosecuting counsel, that in very few cases was a murderer caught red-handed in his guilt, and that thus justice would be completely frustrated, if convictions could not be obtained on circumstantial evidence. That evidence, however, should be of a nature that would make guilt a moral certainty — a clear, logical deduction from facts and motives converging toward a final issue. If this chain of facts and motives lacked one link, the pre-

sumption should be in the prisoner's favour. If the chain were complete, it was equivalent to direct evidence; and the presumption of guilt became a certainty. It was for the jury to consider and weigh the evidence in the present case, with a view of determining whether, in their judgment, the alleged conversations and facts tended to produce not only a *prima facie* case against the prisoner at the bar; but also an absolute conviction that this brutal murder, by which an innocent man lost his life in a violent and savage manner, was perpetrated by the unhappy man in the dock, and by no one else.

He then went into the evidence, word by word, and fact by fact, referring to his notes, which he had carefully taken down. On the question of motive and the repeated declarations of the prisoner that he would seek to be revenged on the murdered man, there appeared to be no room for doubt; for if the evidence of the gypsies were discredited, there was still supplementary evidence that the prisoner did threaten violence, or rather a violent death, against the murdered man repeatedly. The evidence again as to the ownership of the pike, the instrument of the murder, was unassailable. But there were two points that needed clearing up. These were the strange expressions used by the prisoner to the Sergeant of Police who arrested him, and in which he seemed to have expected the death of his parish priest, and not of Kerins; and the evidence of the barmaid that he could not have left the public-house before half-past six on the night of the murder; and the evidence of the police that it was about seven o'clock when the intimation of the tragedy reached them. It was for the jury to determine whether it was possible for the prisoner to cover four miles of ground and perpetrate an atrocious crime within that interval; or whether they would accept the theory of the Crown that the murder was committed much nearer the public-house, and the body driven towards the town with a view of screening the murderer. It was most unfortunate, the judge added, that no evidence was adduced by the

defence to show the whereabouts of the prisoner that night; but the jury would now have to determine whether these varied circumstances brought home guilt to the prisoner in the dock, or whether there was still a grave doubt as to his connection with the murder. The responsibility of determining his guilt or innocence was probably the greatest that could be laid on the consciences of men; and he conjured them to bring to their consideration of the case an unbiassed and unprejudiced judgment, not leaning to the side of justice by any presumptions of guilt, nor to the side of mercy by any false notions of pity; but examining patiently and minutely the evidence and arguments on both sides, and bringing in their verdict, fearless of any consequences but the violation of their solemn oaths.

Here the jury retired, and the judge also arose. It was noticed that as he did so, he leaned down, and seemed to be searching for something, or placing something near his hand; and the whisper ran around the court:

"He's lookin' for the black cap!"

But all public interest was now more keenly aroused, when the prisoner's mother, suddenly standing up in her place in the court, and flinging back the quilted hood of her black cloak, shouted passionately as she stretched her right-hand toward the door:

"Make way, there: make way there, I say, for the minister of God, who is come to save my child!"

She stood rigid as a statue, her right-hand extended toward the door, where now was distinctly seen above the heads of the multitude the pale face darkened by the deep-blue spectacles of Dr. William Gray. He was pushing his way slowly through the dense mass of people, who surged around him and helped to block his way in their new excitement. The judge paused, and sat down. The crier yelled: "Silence!" which the police repeated from man to man, till it died away in an echo at the door; and at length by dint of pushing and elbowing, the tall figure of the great priest came round the dock, and

approached the place where the counsel and solicitors for the defence were sitting. Here there was a hurried conference, pens and pencils flying furiously over sheets of paper, while the deepest silence reigned in court, and the judge looked down interested and curious, and the counsel for the Crown looked anxious and amazed.

At length, the leading barrister for the defence arose, and said:

"An unexpected circumstance has arisen in the case, my Lord; and I request permission to have the jury recalled for a few moments."

The Solicitor-General at once protested vigorously.

"The case is closed, my Lord," he said. "The fullest time was given to the gentlemen in charge of the defence to summon witnesses in the prisoner's favour. I presume the reverend gentleman, who has just appeared in court, is about to give evidence as to character. That can be done when the jury have brought in their verdict. I totally object to have the case opened again."

"It is certainly unusual and irregular, Mr. —," said the judge, addressing the counsel for the defence, "to have the case reopened when the jury are consulting about their verdict. But, perhaps, you would acquaint the court with the nature of the circumstance to which you have alluded, and its bearing on the case?"

"Certainly, my Lord," said the lawyer. "This gentleman, Dr. William Gray, late parish priest of the place where the murder was committed, has come hither at great inconvenience to testify that on the night of the murder, the prisoner was at his house at seven o'clock, and this proves so complete an *alibi*, that I demand the prisoner's immediate discharge."

"Why was not the reverend gentleman here at the earlier stages of the trial?" demanded the judge.

"He was fully prepared to come," was the answer, "but he lost his train, and hastened hither by car. The evidence is so important that it cannot be overlooked."

It was quite true the old priest had missed his train;

and in an agony of remorse had hurried hither, driving his horse furiously the thirty miles that lay between his house and the City. Ever since the murder, or rather since the committal of Duggan, his mind had been the prey of unusual emotions. The sense of shame and personal dishonour for having used physical violence toward an illiterate peasant, gradually developed into a feeling of compassion for his victim; and when the latter lay under the frightful charge of murder, this sentiment of pity was deepened and intensified, until it almost took on the aspect of the pity of great love. Duggan's demeanour, too, since the blow fell upon him — his total change of manner, his silence, and, above all, his intense remorse and despair for having struck a priest, touched the old man deeply. His was one of those dispositions that are as hard as granite toward the proud and the obstinate, but are instantly melted into compassion at the first indication of sorrow or remorse. Hence, as reports daily reached his ears of Duggan's manifest contrition and horror at his conduct, he grew more deeply interested in his case, and what he had originally determined to do through a mere sense of justice, he now determined to accomplish thoroughly through a new-born and affectionate interest in the unhappy man. Perhaps, too, the revelation was opening up wider and wider to his view, that he had badly blundered during life by misaking the lower laws, which serve to bind society together, for the higher law that sweetens and strengthens all human life; and looking back on his ministry of a quarter of a century, he began to see that its fruits would have been greater, if he had taken more deeply to heart the Divine Words: "*A new commandment I give you.*"

It is easy, therefore, to conjecture his agitation and terror, when, on the morning of the trial, having dressed with unusual care, he drove to the railway station to find that the only train that would reach Cork for hours, had already departed. He had an idea of going to the

City the night before; but the dread of meeting people, and sleeping in a strange room, deterred him. Now, half-mad with the terror of thinking that the life of his unhappy parishioner might be lost through his neglect, for he felt, with a pang of reproach, how inexorable was the law, he determined to drive straight to the City, taking his chances of being in time.

"She'll never do it, yer reverence," said the jarvey, whose horse he had hired, and who did not relish the idea of driving thirty miles at a furious rate of speed.

"If she is killed, I'll pay you," was the answer. And so he reached the courthouse as the jury retired; and the big beads of perspiration on his forehead, and the tremulous motions of his hands, showed the tremendous agony through which he had passed.

After a good deal of forensic sparring, the judge recalled the jury; and the aged priest was helped into the witness-box. He was sworn, and gave his name as Dr. William Gray, late parish priest of the united parishes of Doonvarragh, Lackagh, and Athboy; but now retired.

"Do you remember the evening of February the seventh in the present year?" he was asked.

"Yes!" he replied.

"Would you detail the circumstances that brought you into connection with the prisoner that night?"

"I was in my room that night, the room which serves me as library and sitting-room, when a single knock was heard at the door. My housekeeper announced that Duggan wished to see me, adding that he seemed under the influence of drink. I went into the hall; and he at once made a most insulting observation —"

"Would you be good enough to tell the jury what it was?"

"Is it necessary?" the priest asked, in a pleading manner.

"Yes! It is necessary!"

The priest waited for a moment, as if summoning up courage to bear this latest trial; and then said:

"He said: 'I wants to ask you a question. Why didn't you denounce from the altar your niece for eloping with young Wycherly, when you never spared any poor girl before?' These might not have been his exact words, but they were the equivalent."

"Very good. And then?"

"Then I am sorry to say that I lost temper and caught hold of him violently by the neck-cloth, and pushed him against the wall, or the door of the opposite room. In an agony of rage, or perhaps to defend himself, he struck me with his left-hand full on the forehead, breaking my glasses. These are the marks."

And he raised his blue spectacles to show the faint scars where the steel of the broken one had penetrated.

There was some sensation in court here; and the old woman muttered aloud:

"The blagard! Hanging is too good for him now!"

"I then swung him round and round the hall," continued the priest, "and finally flung him out through the open door, where he lay face down on the gravel. I locked and bolted the door; and gave the matter no further heed. It was only when I was retiring to rest at ten o'clock, that I heard him raise himself from the gravel before the hall-door, and go away."

"Can you state exactly the hour when all this occurred?" asked counsel.

"Yes! The clock on my mantelpiece was just chiming seven, when I returned to my room."

"Is your clock correct?" asked the judge.

"Absolutely," said the priest.

"Did you read the dial; for perhaps it might occur that the hours are not struck according to the figures."

"No! I'm blind!" was the mournful admission; and a murmur of sympathy seemed to run through the court. "But there can be no doubt of the hour. The clock is absolutely correct."

"And presuming that this is so, what is the exact distance between the presbytery and the public-house?"

"A little over two miles!" he said.

"And would it be humanly possible for a man to traverse the road to M——, a distance of four miles, commit a murder with all its ghastly details, return to the Cross, and walk two miles towards your house in the space of less than half an hour?"

"That question answers itself," said the priest.

He was then cross-examined.

"You are no longer parish priest of Doonvarragh, and the other unnameable places?"

"No! I'm retired!"

"And you came here to-day to do a good turn for your old friends?"

"I came to testify the truth. Duggan was my worst enemy."

"And a thoroughly and essentially bad character, I presume?"

"No! He is hot-headed and turbulent, especially in drink; and he is a loud boaster. But he is incapable of committing a great crime."

"Now, sir, you have said that the clock was chiming 'seven' when you returned to your room?"

"Yes!"

"Now, don't you think it very unlikely that in the state of high excitement in which you were after your alleged rencontre with the prisoner, you would count the strokes of a clock?"

"I didn't count them," said the priest.

"Then why did you swear the clock was chiming 'seven'?"

"Because the clock had struck six, quarter after six, half-past six, the three-quarters; and I knew I was in the hall only a few minutes."

"I see. And you also allege that the prisoner remained on your gravel walk prostrate for three hours. Do you think that credible; or were you not deceived?"

"Not in the least. He was more than half-drunk; I swung him and threw him with much violence. No one else could be in the vicinity at such an hour."

"I have no more to ask," said counsel. "It is for your Lordship to say to the jury, how far they can accept such evidence against the overwhelming case against the prisoner."

"One question more," said the judge. "You aver that the prisoner fell face downwards on the gravel, and remained there?"

"Yes!"

"And that he was flung with much violence?"

"I'm sorry to say, Yes!"

"There can be no doubt, gentlemen," said the judge, turning toward the jury, "that the evidence of the reverend gentleman puts this case in a different aspect. It supplies the information, sullenly withheld by the prisoner, as to his movements after leaving the public-house. It also goes far towards explaining the nature of the blood-stains which the prisoner was striving to wash away when arrested in the cow-house; and it also seems to explain the strange language used by the prisoner when arrested, when he expressed his horror on supposing that his parish priest had been murdered, and his subsequent unconcern when he found it was Kerins. When he said: 'Is he dead? I suppose I'll swing for it,' it was clearly under the conviction that the blow which he had struck in the hall of the presbytery had had fatal consequences. And when he said subsequently: 'Kerins? Is that all?' it may have expressed his sense of relief that the death of his priest was not upon his soul. Of course, it is for you to determine the value you place on the reverend gentleman's testimony, which, as you have perceived, involved revelations personal to himself, which must have been very humiliating. You will also notice the trouble and inconvenience to which an old, infirm, and blind clergyman has put himself voluntarily

in order to save the life of one who was persistently and cruelly hostile to him. Yet, sympathy with such heroism must not blind you to the other facts put into evidence by the Crown. The admission that the weapon that caused death was the property of the prisoner, and seen last in his possession by his own father, tells terribly against him — ”

“Maybe the pike was stolen for the purpose?” said a shrill voice from the place where the witnesses of the Crown were marshalled behind the Crown counsel.

All eyes turned in that direction and saw Cora, the gypsy girl, in her favourite attitude, elbow on knee, and her chin resting on her hand, and her great black eyes calmly surveying the vast multitude that filled the court.

“Remove that girl instantly!” shouted the judge; and Cora was hustled ignominiously out of court. But the judge was disconcerted, and wound up his address to the jury by briefly saying:

“All these things are now subjects for your deliberation, gentlemen. You will please retire again; and may the God of Truth and Justice guide your decision.”

The judge descended from the bench; the jury retired; but in less than ten minutes returned with their verdict. The judge was recalled, and resumed his seat; and the stillness and silence of death fell upon the court.

“Have you agreed to your verdict, gentlemen?” said the clerk of the court.

“Yes!” replied the foreman, handing down his paper.

“You find that the prisoner, Richard, alias Dick Duggan, is NOT GUILTY of the murder of Edward Kerins?”

“Yes!” was the reply.

A sigh of relief was whispered through the court. The judge said:

“I thoroughly agree with your verdict, although the case lies enshrouded in mystery. The prisoner is discharged!”

A roar of triumph shook the building, and caught up by the multitude waiting outside, was carried down along the street.

Dazed and stupid, Dick Duggan was led from the dock; and his arms were half torn from their sockets by handshakings and congratulations. Then it was remembered that his mother had the first right to see him and embrace him, and he was led through the crowd to where she was sitting. She had been crying with delight and happiness; but when her son was brought to her, she looked at him sternly, instead of embracing him on his rescue from a horrible and shameful death, and sternly said:

"Is it thrue what the priesht said, that you struck him, that you dar lay your hands on the minister of God?"

"Lave the poor fellow alone, Mrs. Duggan," said the more compassionate neighbours. "He has gone through enough already."

But this would not do. She pushed the poor fellow before her rudely, and forced him on his knees before the priest, who was still communing with the lawyers.

"Go down on your two knees," she said, "and ask pardon of God and the minister of God for what you done."

The old priest turned around, and groping in the air, he laid his hand at last on the thick black hair of the unhappy culprit.

"There 'tis all right, now, Mrs. Duggan," he said, "Dick will be a good boy for evermore."

But the old woman, lifting up her face and hands toward heaven, cried:

"Oh, vo, vo, vo, vo! And to think the people never knew you till they lost you!"

And the priest heard the echo in his own heart:

"Oh woe, woe! And I never knew the people till I lost them!"

He would have gladly escaped now from the crowd that still filled the street, but he had to make his way slowly through them; and he had an ovation a king might envy, as he forged his way with difficulty to the car that was

to bear him to the railway station. And as he went, he saw through his blindness the dark ramparts and sullen fortifications with which society seeks to save itself from itself, slowly crumble and fall, and above in the empyrean, the Eternal Star of Love shine liquid and resplendent.

CHAPTER XLVIII

"IT IS THE LAW"

THE murder of Ned Kerins, as the judge said, remained shrouded in mystery. Not the slightest suspicion attached to the gypsy, although it was commonly surmised from the remarks of the gypsy girl, that the tribe knew more than they cared to reveal. And one morning, Dunkerrin Castle, the old keep down by the sea, was untenanted again. In the midnight a strange hulk loomed up over the waters far out at sea; and a couple of boats containing the gypsy family and all their belongings shot alongside. The boats were rowed homewards empty by one man, who soon after disappeared; and a few rags of wretched bedding, and some broken tins alone marked the place where the uncanny people had dwelt. They carried their secret with them.

One alone seemed to divine what had happened. That was Dick Duggan, and he held his peace. He was now a changed man. All the fierce violence of his nature had culminated and broken out on that night when he had committed the unpardonable crime of laying hands on a priest; and he was smitten, as we have seen, with a sudden remorse, that seemed to have opened up the dark gulf of his life, and shown him all its horrors. It was no passing contrition, therefore, that made him wish for death, when death stared him in the face; but a desire to make atonement for a great crime, and to escape the odium and shame that attached to it. And now that he was saved from an ignominious death by the very man he had pursued with such hatred during many years of his life, his character underwent one of those sudden

transformations that may be witnessed in strong and turbulent natures under the visitation of great trial. Dick Duggan became a model man. All the riotous fun and fierceness of his disposition gave way under a subdued and solemn melancholy, which would have been a subject for Celtic jests and laughter, but that the tragedy of his life was so well known. He worked late and early at the farm; was assiduous in the performance of his religious duties; was respectful and helpful to the priests. And gradually, the old-time intimacy with Martha Kerins began to be resumed. For she was young and a widow, and inexperienced; and she needed advice about the buying and selling of cattle, the rotation of crops, etc.; and her people were far away, and Dick Duggan was so often only on the other side of the ditch, and it became so easy to consult him. And Dick was very obliging and courteous, and had forsworn drink, and therefore had a clear head; and so things went on, until one day it suddenly dawned on him that he might become master of the coveted Crossfields for the asking. And he did ask, and was accepted. There was some reclamation on the part of her friends, not because of Dick's antecedents, but because he had no means or money; but Martha, like every good woman, had a will of her own, and she duly asserted it. Her first husband, by the marriage settlement, had left everything to her; and she used her own discretion in disposing of it.

So peace settled down on the united parishes of Doonvarragh, Lackagh, and Athboy — peace after a turbulent and trying time. But their priests were gone — and there was shame in the hearts of the people for many a long day.

Henry Liston, who was in thorough touch and sympathy with his pastor during all the troublous time, could not remain in the parish after him. He argued, If one so great and good, one, too, who so loved his people that he would have died for them, found yet but

disappointment in life and ingratitude in human hearts, what could a weakling, like himself, expect? No. He felt he was not made for the rough play and tumble of life, and he sought peace. Besides, certain letters emanating from that far-off convent, where the sisters, when they were hungry, pulled the convent bell for food, and sat on the bare floor while eating it, began to reveal to him many things. And amongst the rest! this, That, amidst all the "storm and stress" of modern life, the cries and creaking of the chariots of Progress on their way toward some final goal, which no man sees or foresees, and the frantic appeals to the Church and her priests to come out of the sanctuary, and put their shoulders to the chariot-wheels that are forever sinking into the ruts of revolution, perhaps there might be a few souls, who, unpossessed of the physical or intellectual strength that is the first factor in modern progress, might go aside, and help a little by lifting their hands in prayer to the Unseen Powers, that have more to say in the direction of human events than the progressivists and utilitarians of the age will allow. And so, he sought peace for himself and power for many in a quiet little monastery, where there was no activity, no machinery, no economic problems to solve; only the old-fashioned and completely out of date routine, day by day, and night by night, of fasting, contemplation, prayer. And there, under the name of Father Alexis, he lived as unknown and unnoticed as the Saint whose name he was elected to bear.

But the shame on the hearts of the people was greatest for their pastor, whom they felt they had expelled and driven forth from amongst them. He had taken a long, low-roofed cottage in another parish, about a mile to the west of the place where he had ministered for a quarter of a century. A little suite of three rooms ran in front of the house; beyond was a potato-patch badly cultivated and showing but dockweeds and thistles. Beyond the fence of the potato-patch were great sand-dunes, where

the sea-thistles grew in profusion; and these sloped down into a firm, glistening, sandy beach, where the waves thundered at high-tide, and the sea-swallows perched at the ebb of the waters to watch and capture their living food. All the rooms faced the sea; and there he fell asleep on wintry nights, lulled by the soft splash of the waves, or rejoicing in their thunder-voices; and on the long summer days he sat outside on a rude bench, fanned by the sea-breezes, or warmed by the sun. And here one day, there stole across the sands, and across the potato-patch, and into the kitchen that very Annie who, he almost swore in his wrath, should never come under his roof-tree again.

It was the autumn time, and she and Dion had been at home for a few days only, when the terrible aching at her heart to see her suffering and abandoned uncle compelled her to set aside every feeling of dread, and brave the chances of rejection. For she did not know, how could she? of the mighty change that had been wrought in his heart; and she pictured in her girlish imagination her uncle as she had first seen him, tall and powerful and imposing, his gray eyes scanning her face, and his aquiline features softening under the tenderness of a first greeting. And in her ears were echoing (they never ceased to echo) the sharp and bitter words with which he pronounced the sentence of her expulsion, and bade her never dream of seeing him again. How could she know, that his heart, too, was aching after her? How could she hear him call "Annie!" in the midnight, when no voice came in response save the soft or hoarse whispers of the deep?

She stood at the kitchen door, and the old housekeeper almost fainted when she saw her. Then there were greetings and questions in hushed tones; and there were tears over a past that was sombre enough to the eyes of both women.

A hundred times Annie asked the old housekeeper, "How is he? Had he everything he required? Was there any lack of the little comforts he would require

in his old age? Did the people remember him? Who came to see him?"

And the old woman could answer that he was well; but changed, sadly changed to her eyes.

"He's almost like a child now, Miss, or perhaps I should say, Ma'am. He sits all day, thinking and praying, but never talking. But, whin any of the prieshts comes, he sees 'em, and talks to 'em in the ould way. The people? Ah, the people! They sees now their mistake, and the crachures are doing their besht. See here, Miss, or maybe, I should say, Ma'am!"

And she took Annie out and showed her a whole aviary of young turkeys, geese, and hens, cackling melodiously in the yard, or straying for food across the potato-patch.

"And sure ould Mrs. Duggan comes down every week, — ah! she's the dacent ould shtock, altho' her son was a blagard; but he's all right now; and she doesn't know what she can do for the priesht. But still he's lonesome, Miss, or maybe I should say, Ma'am; lonesome for somethin'; and I do be sometimes afeard that maybe the death is comin' on him."

"I wonder if I could see him, Anne, without his knowing it?"

"Yerra, sure I'll tell him, Miss, that you're here."

"Oh, no! not for the world, Anne," she said, in a great fright. "I mean not now, some other time; and don't tell him for your life that I've been here."

"Faix, I won't, Miss, for he'd kill me if he knew it, and knew I didn't tell him."

"But I'll come again. Tell me now, when you go in or out of his room, does he know you, or speak to you?"

"Yerra, no, Miss. Sure he never opens his lips to me. I takes him in his breakfast and dinner; and I removes the things; and he never says, 'Iss, Aye, or No,' no more than if I wor never there at all."

"And do you think now, if I — that is, supposing that I took your place some day, and went in with dinner,

do you think he would know that it wasn't you that was there?"

"Yerra, how could he, Miss — Ma'am, I should say? That is, unless you spoke to him."

"Well, now, I'll come some other day, perhaps tomorrow, and try. You know, Anne, that he is old, and that it would never do to give him a great surprise."

"I suppose so, Miss," said Anne, somewhat incredulously.

"You know old people have sometimes died suddenly from sudden surprises like that. We must go gently, Anne. I wonder could I see his bedroom now? Is there any danger he would know?"

"Not the laste, Miss," said Anne. "He won't know but you're one of the neighbours come in wid a few chickens."

They entered the old man's bedroom. It was not too bad. But the heart of the girl sank as her quick eyes noticed the stains on the pillow covers and the counterpane; and some other aspects of things that showed that the skill of the washerwoman was not often called into requisition.

But she said nothing, fearing to hurt the feelings of the old domestic. But, as she was going away, she said gaily:

"There are a lot of linens and things up at the house for which there is no use. I think I'll bring them down to you. And tell me, what does uncle eat?"

"Oh, wisha, Miss, he doesn't ate as much as a sparrow. He haves a cup of tea in the morning, and a bit of toast about the size of a sixpenny bit. And thin I gets him a chop or a chicken for his dinner; but the finest lady in the land couldn't ate less of it. I don't know, I'm sure, how he dives, at all, at all."

"Very well, Anne. Now we'll put our heads together, you and I, as we did long ago — do you remember my cooking, Anne?"

"Ah, wisha, Miss, don't I? Sure 'twas you had the light hand —"

"Very good! Now, we'll commence again; and I'll engage I'll make uncle eat something. Good-bye now! Did I tell you I was married, Anne?"

"You didn't, Miss; but sure I guessed it. And there was me, like an old fool, callin' you 'Miss' all the time. But sure you looks as young, Miss, as the night you stepped off the car in the rain, and gev us all the fright."

"Ah me! I was young then. I am older now, Anne, because I have seen a great deal."

"Wisha thin, Miss, I wish you luck, and may your ondhertakin' thrive wid you. Sure won't the priesht be glad whin he hears it?"

"Of course," said Annie, dubiously. "But not a word, Anne, not a word that I was here. Remember, I'll come to-morrow again."

She came, and brought a complete change of linen, etc., for his bedroom; and glided away again without a word with him. The old housekeeper again urged her to go in and speak to her uncle; but her heart failed her. But his quick senses noticed a change in his bedroom.

"Anne," said he, half jocularly, "you're becoming quite fashionable. Where did you get the lavender that is in my pillow-covers and bed-linen?"

Anne coughed behind her hand; and, this seemed to irritate all her bronchial tubes, because she was seized with a sudden paroxysm of coughing and wheezing. When she recovered her breath, she said faintly:

"I suppose somethin' quare got into the wather; or maybe, 'twas the new soap."

"Maybe so," he said, and he relapsed into silence again.

Then one day, Annie summoned up courage, and with a white face and a beating heart, she took the dinner into the old man's room. She nearly fell at the threshold; but calling on all her strength, she entered the room, and softly laid the plates and dishes on the table. If he

should speak now, she thought, as her hands trembled! But not a word. And she was able to observe him, as he sat bolt upright in an arm-chair near the window. But her self-possession was near giving way, when she saw the change, which was greater than even she dreaded. For the tall form, though erect, seemed dwarfed and shrunk; the pale face was paler, and she noticed with a gasp of pity that he, who had been so fastidious and particular about his personal appearance, was unshaven, and that his clothes were discoloured and soiled. A little rent in the sleeve spoke volumes to her, and the seam of his coat was opened where it fell over his fingers. He held a book in his hand — one of his old calf-bound volumes, and his fingers were feeling one of the pages, as if he were striving by the sense of touch to read what was written therein. He made no movement when she entered the room, and seemed not to notice her presence; but, as she was leaving, he gave a little start forward, and seemed to be listening intently. She glided softly from the room, and fell into a chair quite faint and weak with emotion.

Yet she came every day, always bringing some little article of food or furniture or clothing to make a little happier the lonely life that was now spread before her in all its pathos and solemnity. She didn't seem to know how acute are the senses of the blind; and how the swift intelligence and observation of her uncle were gathering clue after clue from her movements.

She had now become so accustomed to enter his room unnoticed, that she had become almost reckless, and probably betrayed herself in many little ways. And one day, as she busied herself around the dinner-table, arranging cloths and napkins, she heard her name called softly, and as if by question:

"Annie?"

She stood silent, watching him intently. He was leaning forward, as if eager to catch fresh indications of her presence, and yet not quite sure that he was right. But he said again in a louder tone:

"Annie, I know 'tis you. Come here!"

And she went over, and knelt humbly at his feet, placing her clasped hands on his knees. He stretched forth his withered hand, and passed it gently and affectionately over her hair, and then more tenderly and reverently over the soft lines of her face. She looked up, and saw the tears streaming down the furrowed cheeks, and she knew all.

"Oh, Uncle, Uncle! and have you quite forgiven me?"

He said nothing, but drew her more closely to him. Then he found words to say:

"I knew you'd come. I knew *you* wouldn't desert me!"

And that was all. For now in the sunset of his life the clouds had lifted, and were now wreathing themselves in all lovely forms around the little remnant of his life. Annie came every day, and remained with him from luncheon time to dinner. Every day Dion drove her down the four or five miles from Rohira to the home of the lonely priest. At first, he drove back when his young wife had alighted; and came for her again in the evening. But when the great revelation was made he too had to come and stay. When Annie broke to her uncle the fact of her marriage with Dion, he started, and just one flash of the old spirit broke out again.

"Wycherly? Why, he's a Protestant!"

But she was able to assure him that she had been faithful to her principles, and then she opened up before him, as only a devoted wife could, all the splendours of Dion's character, his fearlessness, his honour, his manliness, his freedom above all from the passion of gain. And many an afternoon was whiled away by Dion's recital of his many adventures by sea and land. And then his voice became softer, as he remembered with just a little touch of conscience, the devotion of his black dependents; and softer still, when he spoke of that grave beneath the African skies, where the stricken brother had found rest.

"It was poor Jack, sir," he said. "that proposed for

me to Annie. I was too much afraid of her to say all that was in my mind. But Jack, poor fellow, knew it all. And one day, he clasped our hands together above his hammock, and 'twas all done. Of course, Annie told me at once that it could never be, never, never, never! Then I began to find that never meant until —. And then she began to explain to me all about the mysteries of faith; but I had no head for these things. I could box the compass, or shoot a flying fish, or horse-whip a coward; but I couldn't get hold of such slippery things as mysteries and doctrines. So Annie explained to me all about explicit faith. And then the good Padre came; and he said to me, 'Do you believe all the Catholic Church teaches?' And I said, 'If Annie believes all the Church teaches, and I believe all that Annie believes, isn't that the same thing?' And, by Jove, he was puzzled; but, of course, he had to say 'Yes!' And I was baptized; and we were spliced. And, by Jove, sir, I hope the Angels will put off my call to glory for some time. I don't want any other heaven just yet."

At another time in earlier life, the stern old theologian would hardly accept this kind of explicit faith as a preliminary to entering the Church; but now he saw by the illumination of sorrow great hidden depths beneath the apparent frivolity of this strong character, and he said nothing. But he asked, with some hesitation, how Dion's father had taken the news of his son's conversion and marriage.

"Dad? Ah, if you were to see dad. He's twenty years younger since we came home; and when he puts on his velvet jacket, and brushes down his hair on his shoulders, he's quite a beau. One day, we had a funny little scene which explains matters. We were talking about old times, and Jack's terrible illness, and Annie's great tenderness and kindness, and dad said: 'I remember I once expressed a wish that I had a daughter, like you, Annie.' And Annie blushed, and said, 'I heard you, sir!' And that's the reason, I suppose," Dion continued,

as Annie entered the room, "that Annie set the trap for me; and I, an innocent fellow, fell into it."

And one day, Annie proposed to her uncle, very modestly and gently, that she would read to him some hours each day, at intervals, from his old favourite books, the classics, or the theologians, whom he had never parted with. His face lighted up with pleasure. She took down a Horace, and began to read one of the Odes. The Latin was beyond her own comprehension, for old Horace had a dainty way of saying things. But she had not proceeded far, when he stopped her:

"Do you think you understand the meaning of that Ode, Annie?"

"No!" she said. "I recognize a word here and there; and that is all."

"And 'tis enough," he said. "I think I've had enough of Horace."

"Well, then, we'll try the magician, Virgil," she said, replacing the Horace, and taking down a Delphin Virgil.

She read on for some time, opening the pages here and there; but he seemed to be weary of it also.

"Well, then, here's St. Thomas," she said. "Of course, 'tis all Greek to me; but I shall be able to read so that you, Uncle, can follow."

And she commenced to read slowly and with difficulty from the *Summa*. He listened more patiently now, and apparently with some pleasure. But, the brain was now less elastic than in former times; and he again showed signs of weariness.

"I'll tell you what, Uncle," she said gaily, although her heart misgave her, "I'll bring on to-morrow what Dion calls a good rousing novel — lots of fighting and love-making, and thunder and lightning; and I'll put you through a course of them."

He smiled. He had never read a novel in the whole course of life.

She kept her word. She brought down not what she

had suggested; but a tender and gentle tale; but alas! it was full of the tragedy and sorrow of the world. He grew almost angry.

"Is there not sorrow and trouble enough in real life," he said, "without wringing our hearts with pictured misery and desolation?"

And Annie desisted; and looked around her in a hopeless manner.

There was an old Greek Testament, hidden among his books; and she took it out, and dusted it.

"Well," she said, "I must keep up my Greek, Uncle. I wonder can I translate this?"

And she opened the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, and began to read.

This time he did not interrupt her. The soft, sweet music of the Greek, in which are enshrined the solemn messages of the "new Commandment," sank into his soul; and he allowed his niece to read on to the very end of that sublime discourse and prayer for his disciples which the Divine Master uttered under the most solemn circumstances of His life.

"Take the Douay Testament, and read it for me again, if you are not tired," he said.

And commencing at the words: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me," she read uninterruptedly to the end of the seventeenth chapter.

"That will do!" he said. "That is now my poetry, philosophy, and theology, unto the end. We need no more!"

And every day, even unto the end, that was his mental food and medicine. He saw at last that the "new Commandment" was the "final law" of the universe, although everything in Nature and in Man seems to disprove it; or as that sad poet interpreted it, who, had he lived, would have been the fervent disciple of Him whom he railed against during life:

“Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.”

It is a doctrine difficult to believe, as the “law” is a difficult one to practise; but the law is final. It is the last word that has been uttered by Divine and human philosophy.

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